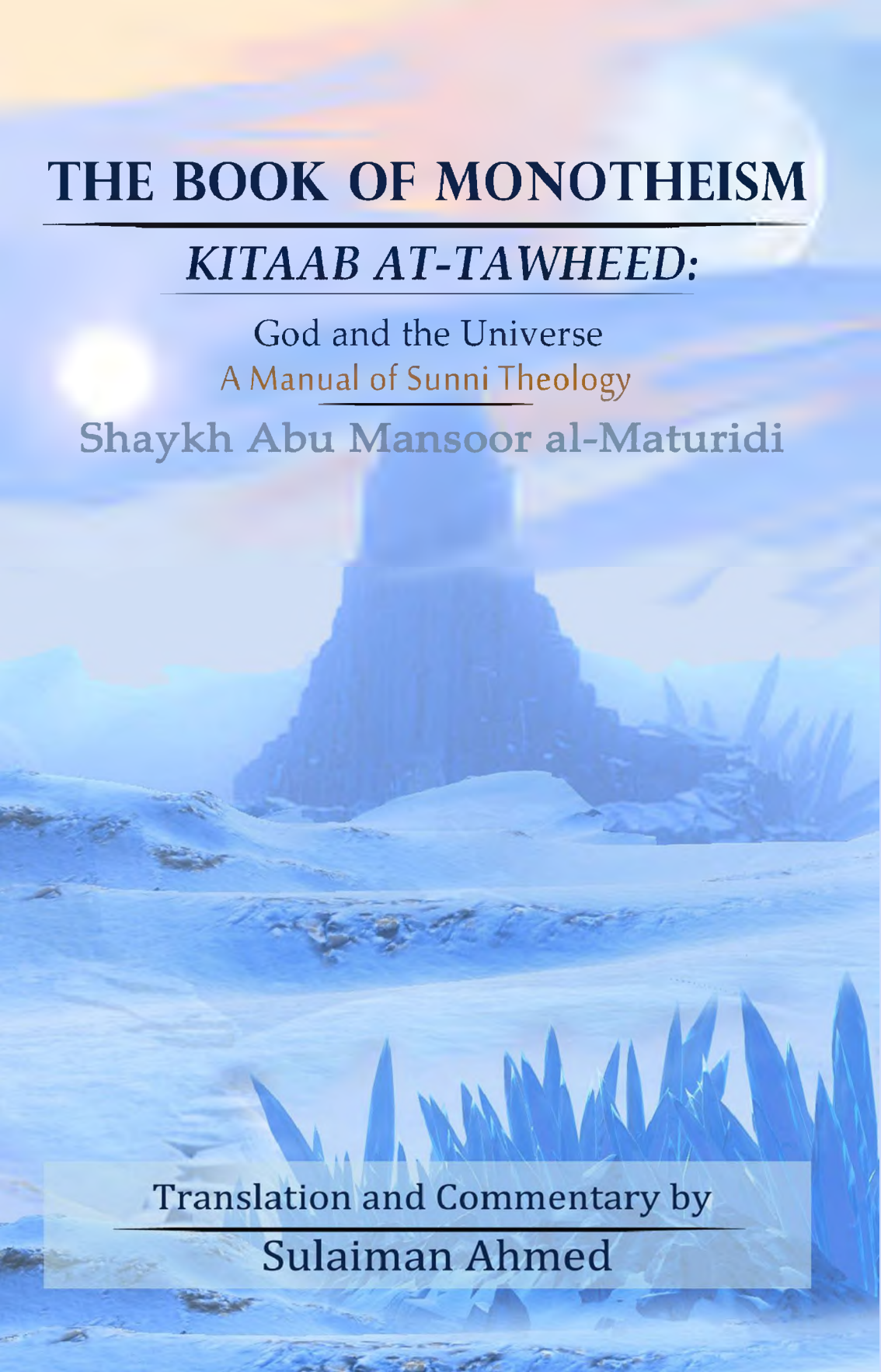
THE BOOK OF MONOTHEISM

KITAAB AT-TAWHEED:

God and the Universe

A Manual of Sunni Theology

Shaykh Abu Mansoor al-Maturidi



Translation and Commentary by

Sulaiman Ahmed

Abu Mansur al-Maturidi (d. 333/944) can be regarded as the founder or systematiser of orthodox Sunni Islamic theology and dogma, with a majority of Muslims through history claiming to follow his school of thought. Born in Maturid, a locality in Samarkand, he authored many books in a wide variety of fields, but only two have survived until our time – *'Kitaab at-Tawheed'* and his voluminous commentary on The Quran, *'Ta'wilat ahl al-Sunna'*.

Scholars have posited that he inherited his doctrinal positions from the earliest Sunni Imam, Abu Hanifa, and then systemised and interpreted them. Others argue that he himself formulated the school.

'Kitaab at-Tawheed' is the oldest extant detailed text in Islamic doctrine and has been relied upon by practically all orthodox Muslim theologians succeeding Maturidi. To the present day, a vast number of Muslims either follow his school or specific doctrines from within it.

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Kitaab At-Tawheed:

God and the Universe

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Translation and Commentary

by

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The Book of Monotheism Kitaab At-Tawheed
God and the Universe
A Manual of Sunni Theology
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First hardback edition printed in 2019

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-9993775-0-2

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Published by Maturidi Publications

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Translation and Commentary by Sulaiman Ahmed

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"There is only one good – knowledge, and one evil – ignorance."

– **Socrates**

To my Grandmother Jamila Akbar

Without whom none of this would have begun

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Arabic Transliteration Key

ء	'	Glottal stop: **a**, **i** or **u** sound	غ	*gh*	As 'gh' in ghoul but heavier
ب	*b*	As 'b' in bread	ف	*f*	As 'f' in ferry
ت	*t*	As 't' in tea	ق	*q*	As 'q' in quote but heavier
ث	*th*	Like an 's' but with a lisp	ك	*k*	As 'k' in kilo
ج	*j*	As 'j' in Jack	ل	*l*	As 'l' in look
ح	*ĥ*	As 'h' but deep in the throat	م	*m*	As 'm' in mouse
خ	*kh*	As 'ch' in loch but heavier	ن	*n*	As 'n' in nose
د	*d*	As 'd' in door but lighter	ه	*h*	As 'h' in hurricane
ذ	*dh*	Like a 'z' but with a lisp	و	*w*	As 'w' in water
ر	*r*	As 'r' in road but more trill	ي	*y*	As 'y' in year
ز	*z*	As 'z' in zoo	ـَ	*a*	The 'a' vowel
س	*s*	As 's' in serpent	ـِ	*i*	The 'e' or 'i' vowel
ش	*sh*	As 'sh' in shine	ـُ	*u*	The 'u' or 'o' vowel
ص	*ŝ*	Like 's' but very heavy	ا/ى	*ā*	Elongated vowel: *aa*
ض	*đ*	Like 'd' but heavier	و	*ū*	Elongated vowel: *oo*
ط	*ŧ*	Like 't' but heavier	ي	*ī*	Elongated vowel: *ee*
ظ	*ẓ*	Like a heavier version of *dh*	ـَو	*aw*	"aw"
ع	'	Deep throat high pitched 'a'	ـَي	*ay*	"ay"
ة	*ah; at* (construct state)		ال	*al-* (article)	

Introduction

Shaykh Abu Mansoor al-Maturidi is the Islamic philosopher and theologian responsible for establishing one of the two main Sunni theological schools, the other being the *Asharis,* founded by Abu al-Hasan al-Ashari (d. 324/935). (There are some who argue that the *Athari* school should be included as a third, whilst others disagree as to the merits of its inclusion).[i]

In spite of the fact that al-Maturidi holds such a significant role in Islamic thought, there has been little analysis of his ideas, though he established his school more than a thousand years ago. The works of al-Maturidi have not been translated into English and even in Arabic there is limited to no work produced on his writings. There have been two main works in the English language: "*Roots of Synthetic Theology in Islam: A Study of the Theology of Abu Mansur Al-Maturidi*" written by Mustafa Ceric in 1995 (whose translation of certain excerpts I used to help support my own) and "*Al-Maturidi and Sunni Theology in Samarkand*" by Ulrich Rudolph written in 1997 (whose chapter headings were used in some instances). It is quite accurate then, to state that al-Maturidi and his ideas have not yet been explored in detail, if not outright neglected, in both the English and Arabic Languages. Therefore, I hope that the present work will help fill a significant void in academia and facilitate the advancement of research into the original ideas of a founder of Sunni Islamic thought.

The majority of Muslims are (or at least claim to be) followers of the Maturidi School, and yet they have not had access to his ideas. One of

[i] The *Athari* School is split into two, those who follow the teachings of Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728/1328) and those who follow Ibn Qudamah al-Maqdisi (d. 620/1223). Despite their differences, anthropomorphism is included within both of their teachings.

the many reasons for this is that the language of al-Maturidi is quite challenging, as he doesn't use standard Arabic grammatical rules in his writings. It therefore requires someone who is accustomed to his works and thought to be able to bring forth his ideas in translation. However, this is by no means the only or main reason for al-Maturidi to be relegated to the fringes of Islamic education. We will attempt to explore the various causes of this omission here.

There has been, in modern Sunni thought, and especially since the 20th Century, an aggressive, systematic and well financed infiltration of ideas from literalists and anthropomorphists (people ascribing a body or human attributes to God) – most obviously financed by the regressive Wahhabi Saudi regime, which claims (and is often accepted as) representing 'custodianship' of Islam, in places as far afield as Central London and China, to the point where all Muslim groups have been affected by their beliefs, whether in theology, Islamic jurisprudence ('Sharia Law') or in *Hadith* (purported sayings of the Prophet Muhammad). This helps explain why Maturidi's book, with its staunch rationalism and condemnation of anthropomorphism, has never been translated despite calls for it even from orientalists. This speaks volumes about the intentions of many of al-Maturidi's 'followers' when we compare it to the plethora of editions and translations of the works of latter-day Salafist favourites like Ibn Taymiyya and the even more latter-day founders of other 'sects' from the *Ikhwaanis* (the 'Muslim Brotherhood') to '*Hizb Ut Tahrir*'. It is much like having numerous books on Relativity by latter day polemical interlopers and 'Star Trek' fan fiction but 'neglecting' to publish Einstein himself (who also insisted on presenting his ideas to the lay public).

In order to understand how this occurred, one needs to go back to interactions between the divergent groups today represented by Salafists

and others claiming to carry the torch for Muslims, during the early periods of Islam, when petrodollars were not a factor as they are now, but violence was still a currency in dealing with your opponents – just as it is in 'Islamic' regimes and movements today.

In early Islam, numerous groups held distinct views and doctrines. You can create a taxonomy of such groups based on a wide range of dogmas; for example, those who believed that the physical Quran was the uncreated word of God - which includes the anthropomorphists and the Hanbalites - and those who argued against this on the basis that something uncreated (God's eternal speech) cannot be within something created (the Universe). This group included the *Mutazalites* (very broadly speaking, 'rationalists'), the Maturidis and Imam Bukhari. Another classification of these groups can be made on the basis of the distinct methodologies employed by them in relation to the role of reason within Islam. Those who argued for the importance of reason were known as the *'Ahl ar-Ra'y'* ('People of Rational Discretion'), and this included Maturidi, *Mutazalites*, the *Murji* school (who were followers of Imam Abu Hanifa), as well as the Malikis. They held that reason was the focal point in all forms of analysis, whether it was philosophical inquiry or analysing scripture, such as the Quran or *hadith*. They believed that the Quran and reason conform to one another and that the Quran does not circumvent reason. The *Mutazalites* even argued that a person could come to the realisation about the ideas taught in the Quran based on philosophical inquiry alone and thus the reason for the Quranic revelation is in order to realign one's thoughts when they have become 'uncalibrated' due to social influences that adversely affect the proper use of the intellect – somewhat akin to tuning a piano. It was on this basis that the *'Ahl ar-Ra'y'* held that *Hadith* were a secondary source within Islam, and therefore if these *Hadith* conflict with the Quran (which is a primary source) or, importantly, reason, then they should be rejected. On the

other hand, the '*Ahl al-Hadith*' ('Partisans of *Hadith*' – again, very broadly speaking, anti – rational traditionists and literalists) claimed that ***hadiths*** should be centrally located in Islamic thought, with some arguing that their importance was at the same level as the Quran itself. They believed in following the sources without questioning their authenticity (for example, if a *hadith* was narrated in a famous collection, it was considered heretical to question its veracity – much as is the case with collections such as '*Sahih Bukhari*' today). This camp includes the Hanbalis, the modern-day Salafis as well as many Shafis.

Al-Maturidi was included in the group known as '*Ahl ar-Ra'y*'. His viewpoint was that *Ahad hadith* (solitary narrations making up the vast majority of the *hadith* corpus) have an equal possibility of being authentic or fabricated.[ii] Therefore, if these narrations conflict with stronger evidence or the Quran, they cannot be accepted. This can be seen from a number of examples where he rejected narrations that most Muslims today not only unquestioningly accept but are not afraid to label those who do question them 'heretics' or even non-Muslims.

Maturidi questioned the authenticity of the tradition relayed about the *Miraj* (the Prophet Muhammad's 'Night Journey'). Al-Maturidi made a clear distinction between the first leg of the journey that is mentioned in the Quran - which is the Prophet Muhammad travelling from the Holy Mosque to the 'Furthest Mosque', which most argue is from Mecca to Jerusalem - and the second leg of the journey (not mentioned in the Quran), which is the Prophet Muhammad ascending from Jerusalem to the Heavens and eventually meeting God Almighty. Al-Maturidi argued that we should restrict our understanding and belief of the journey to what is stated in the Quran and all other related stories from inauthentic sources or from solitary narrations should not be included in one's

[ii] See Page 13

understanding of the 'Night Journey'.[iii] If one was to say this at a sermon in most UK mosques today, it would likely start a riot.

Another example of al-Maturidi's methodology was his rejection of the narration that the Prophet Muhammad was affected by black magic and was no longer aware of his actions. This *hadith* was once again later found in '*Sahih Bukhari*': *"Once the Prophet was bewitched, so that he began to imagine that he had done a thing when in fact, he had not done it."*[iv] Despite the close resemblance between this and the 'Satanic Verses' incident (also bizarrely regarded as 'authentic' not only by Islamophobes but by the partisans of *Hadith* as well), rejecting this absurd idea will expose you to howls of protest and instant anathematisation from the vast majority of

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[iii] Al-Maturidi, Abu Mansoor, '*Tawilat ahl al-Sunnah*', (Baghdad, al-Irshad, 1983), (Surah *Al-Isra*, Verse 1). Another instance was the bizarre story of Moses and the stone which was relayed in the following *hadith* found in (again, very aggressively canonised) '*Sahih Bukhari*': "The Prophet PBUH said; *'Moses was a shy and reserved man. None of his skin would be seen due to his shyness. Some people from the Sons of Israel insulted him and said; He doesn't hide himself except for some defect in his skin, either vitiligo or scrotal hernia or some other defect. God wanted to defend Moses from this insult. Once, Moses was alone and took off his clothes and put them on a rock. Then he went for a bath. Once he finished, he came to take his clothes, but the rock started running with his clothes on it. Moses took his staff and ran after the rock. He started calling; 'O rock, my clothes! O rock, my clothes!' He kept on walking until he reached the place where group of the Sons of Israel were sat. They saw his body as the most perfect shape that God had created. That is how God defended him from what they used to accuse him of. Then the rock stood, and Moses took his clothes and put them on. Then he beat the rock with his staff. I swear by God, that rock has three or four or five scars on it from striking by the staff. That is what is the meaning of the verse* [of the Quran]; *'O believers! Do not be as those who have hurt Moses, and then God freed him from their accusation. Indeed he [Moses] was very glorious before God."*[iii]

Al-Maturidi said that this was a peculiar and outlandish statement and rejected it. He argued that the Prophet Moses would order his people to cover their private parts and therefore it is improbable that they would expect to bathe with him or to look at his private parts. He also argued that it is not possible that the rock would run away with the clothes of Moses (found in Muhammad bin Ismaeel bin Ibrahim al-Bukhari, "*Sahih al-Bukhari*", Hadith 5765)

[iv] Muhammad bin Ismaeel bin Ibrahim al-Bukhari, "*Sahih al-Bukhari*", Hadith 5765

Sunni Muslims today. Maturidi also said that the reason for the revelation (*Asbab al-Nuzul*) of 'Surah *Al-Falaq*' ('The Daybreak') and 'Surah *Al-Naas*' ('Mankind'), two parts of the Quran which most people in current times claim refer to the Prophet Muhamad being affected by 'magical forces', was not as a result of magic at all, but instead these chapters were revealed whilst the Prophet was on a journey.[v]

Ironically, Maturidi today would be regarded as a heretic by those very sectarians who claim to be his loyal followers - for example modern 'Hanafis'.

Al-Maturidi rejected supplementary information about things mentioned in the Quran. He did not accept information that was added by the *Mufassireen* (commentators of the Quran), or extra content from the books of other religions such as the *Israeliyaat*[vi], the Torah and the New Testament. Using these to elaborate on the Quran or even to openly add to it was (and is) common practice amongst commentators and scholars, and this can be seen by the fact that most of the famous books of *Tafsir* (Quranic Interpretation) proliferate with such narrations – such as that of Ibn Kathir (which by no coincidence is a favourite of Salafists).[vii] Al-Maturidi rejected these stories because he explained that they had been relayed through *Ahad* (solitary narrations) and *Ahad* narrations cannot be accepted in the Maturidi School in issues of *Aqeedah* (creed or theological dogma). (For a detailed treatment on the use and

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[v] Al-Maturidi, Abu Mansoor, '*Tawilat ahl al-Sunnah*', (Massasah al-Risalah, Beirut, Lebanon, 2004), Volume 3, page 162, and Volume 5, pages 543, 545

[vi] these are narrations that have originated from Jewish and Christian sources and despite often being considered apocryphal within their own religious traditions, are relied upon to an often ridiculous extent by Muslim exegetes.

[vii] Al-Maturidi, Abu Mansoor, '*Tawilat ahl al-Sunnah*', (Baghdad, al-Irshad, 1983), (Surah Al-Isra, Verse 1)

misuse of *hadith* and supplementary narrations in Islam, see my earlier book '*Hanafi Principles of Testing Hadith*').

Take as an additional example the following in the Quran:

"And when Moses said to his people, "Indeed, Allah commands you to slaughter a cow." They said, "Do you take us in ridicule?" He said, "I seek refuge in Allah from being among the ignorant." They said, "Call upon your Lord to make clear to us what it is." [Moses] said, "[Allah] says, 'It is a cow which is neither old nor virgin, but median between that,' so do what you are commanded." They said, "Call upon your Lord to show us what is her colour." He said, "He says, 'It is a yellow cow, bright in colour – pleasing to the observers.' They said, "Call upon your Lord to make clear to us what it is. Indeed, [all] cows look alike to us. And indeed we, if Allah wills, will be guided." He said, "He says, 'It is a cow neither trained to plow the earth nor to irrigate the field, one free from fault with no spot upon her.' "They said, "Now you have come with the truth." So they slaughtered her, but they could hardly do it."[viii]

Al-Maturidi explained that many of the *Mufasireen* (Quranic commentators) made the assumption that God's initial order was general and was not specific in terms of the description of the cow. Later, due to the many questions and interrogative nature of the Israelites, God made the attributes of the cow specific by way of a lesson. Al-Maturidi rejected this notion as he argued that this infers that there was a change in God's command, because initially it was meant to be a plain cow and only after multiple questions from the Israelites was it changed to a specified version of the cow. Al-Maturidi argued that believing that God

[viii] Quran, Surah *Al-Baqarah* (2:67-71)

'changes His mind' is unacceptable and went so far as to say that such an idea would be tantamount to disbelief.[ix]

These examples (and there are many others) hopefully adequately demonstrate the difference in methodological approach between Maturidi and the '*Ahl ar-Ra'y*' and the '*Ahle Hadith*'.

These two groups were not only in an intellectual but a political battle for supremacy as well. For a time, the *Mutazalites* held the upper hand due to the Abbasid Caliph Al-Ma'mun ibn Harun al-Rashid (d. 217/833) being an advocate of *Mutazalite* theology. He launched an inquisition against the anthropomorphists in regards to the issue of whether the physical Quran is the uncreated attribute of God[x] known as the *Mihna.*[xi] He also imprisoned the famous *hadith* scholar Ahmad bin Hanbal for the belief he held on the same issue.[xii] The son of Al-Ma'mun, Abu Ja'far Harūn ibn Muhammad (Al-Wathiq) (d. 233/847) became the next Caliph and was also an adherent of the doctrine of the *Mutazalites.* During the period of the *Mutazalites* rule, the traditionists were persecuted because of their anthropomorphist views, which as mentioned, included the dogma that the physical Quran (i.e. the actual published book that you could purchase today) was uncreated.[xiii]

[ix] Al-Maturidi, Abu Mansoor, '*Tawilat ahl al-Sunnah*', (Baghdad, al-Irshad, 1983), (Surah Al-Baqarah, Verse 67)

[x] Which was what they believed, meaning the physical book and the human recitation of it were part of God

[xi] Nawas, John A, '*A Reexamination of Three Current Explanations for al-Ma'mun's Introduction of the Mihna*'. International Journal of Middle East Studies, vol 26, No. 4, (Nov. 1994), 615-629

[xii] Kelsay, Jon, '*Divine Commands and Social Order: The Case of Classical Islam*', The Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics, vol 10, (1990), 63-80.

[xiii] Ibn Hayyan, Waki, '*Akhbar al-Qudat*', (Cairo, Al-Maktabat al-Tijariyah, 1947), p. 227

Afterwards came Caliph Ja'far ibn Muhammad al-Mu'tasim (al-Mutawakkil) (d. 246/861) who repealed the *Mihna*[xiv] and actively propagated the traditionists doctrines, which resulted in the beginning of the persecution of the *Mutazalites*. This continued throughout the succession of the other Caliphs - through to the time of al-Maturidi and afterwards. It was under the rule of the Caliph Qadr Billa (d. 422/1031) that Hanbalism became the official creed of the empire. Qadr Billa was known for forcing the *Mutazalites* to make public recantations of their beliefs and he also banned them and the *Rawafidh (Shia)* from holding any public discussions. Henceforth, they had to speak in secrecy.[xv] Prince Mahmud, under the instructions of Qadr Billa burnt, killed, imprisoned and banished many of the (largely) Hanafi *Mutazalites* and *Shia*. He also ordered that people should curse them in the mosques as they were heretics.[xvi] He even made a ruling that whoever says the Quran is created is an apostate and he must be killed, which was a complete reversal and a huge escalation from the time of Caliph Al-Ma'mun. By the end of his reign, Hanbali Islam was totally authoritative and all opposition, namely the Hanafis and Shia, had been completely subjugated.

I know from my own early education that Muslims are usually keenly taught the first part of this story – the imprisonment of Imam Ahmad in the *Minha* – to the point of hagiography. But the hundreds of years of persecution by his followers after this is assiduously avoided or even presented in a good light. The result is that we don't possess most of the books of the opposing groups such as *Mutazalites* and *Murjia* to decide

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[xiv] Ibn Jawzi, Abd al-Rahman, *Manaqib Ahmad ibn Hanbal*, (Cairo, n.d) p. 348

[xv] Ibn al-Jawzi, *Al-Muntazam fil Akhbar al-Muluk wa'l-Umam*, (Hyderabad, Dairatul-Ma'arifil-Uthmaniyyah, 1939), Volume 7, Page 287

[xvi] Ibid p. 289

for ourselves; book burning as a strategy for 'winning' an argument is nothing new unfortunately.

The political situation had significant ramifications on what became known as 'orthodox' Islam. The doctrine of the Hanafi *Mutazalites* was eradicated entirely from history, their books destroyed and their scholars killed. I believe that this also included many of the Hanafi Maturidi's, who valued the role of reason above tradition. Therefore, what remained was largely the doctrine of the traditionists and those who held similar views. In terms of the teachings that survived until current times, then al-Maturidi's book was the most 'reason based' ideology that was left in existence. This is because over time, the role of reason was subjugated and even the Hanafis and Maliki's began incorporating the ideologies and dogmas of traditionists into their belief system (often just to survive). These theological and philosophical battles were lost because those in power held anthropomorphist/'Salafist'/Hanbali doctrines and this meant that Islam morphed into the version that is followed by many people in current times.

All that did remain of the *Mutazalites* was that their principles were used to form Hanafi *Usul al-Fiqh* (principles of Islamic jurisprudence), which are followed by most Muslims. The same can be said for theologians from various schools within Islam who deployed the same rational arguments that were used by the *Mutazalites*. The fact that al-Maturidi's book remains is most likely because he managed to relay enough proof based on transmission that the traditionists did not destroy or supress it. Therefore, if one was to put 'reason' and literalism or *hadith* on a spectrum, with reason being on the left and 'transmission' on the right, then al-Maturidi's was the most 'leftist' book that remained. This is probably due to it being not *that* much towards the left, and any other book that was further 'left' was destroyed and the scholars who held

these viewpoints were frequently killed. Therefore, in my view, most of the books that remain from these periods are enough towards the 'right' of the spectrum that they survived the culling - until current times at least.

It also meant that Islam became a largely anti-intellectual religion where it is not permissible to question the *status quo*, and reason has been relegated to something which has little significance and is not respected or valued (beyond its utility in harassing Christians about the Trinity or trying to rebut atheists, in which case it is wheeled out with alacrity).

Take the example of the well-known and oft decried tendency of Muslims today to insist on stoning adulterers. Neither the fact that the punishment must fit the crime, nor that the punishment for adultery in 'Sharia' is far worse than for killing a baby (or mass murder), nor that the contrary teaching (i.e. don't kill adulterers) is found in the Quran, is enough to make Muslims stop and think about this. Instead, simply adducing that there are 'traditions' or *hadith* supporting this practice is enough to secure instant capitulation from even the most educated Muslims and for them to start trying to burn anyone who says otherwise at the metaphorical stake: not only does Revelation from God override reason (a privilege God never once asks for), so does dubious historical data.

This links nicely to the question of why this book was never translated or even taught in Islamic institutes, even though it is in fact the primary doctrinal book of Sunni Islam. As explained, over time Islamic education became largely anti-rational (or rather, wildly inconsistent as to the use of reason – which was applied only to other people's beliefs and never to Muslims' own narrations; the result of which we see on campus today, where Liberals and other faiths are bombarded with extreme rationalism by Muslims, only for this to be immediately jettisoned at the first sign of

it interfering with Muslims preconceived sectarian dogmas) as well as overly reliant on *hadith*; aspects of anthropomorphism crept into its dogma, and extremist, as well as violent ideas which are associated with this (as will be demonstrated shortly), were incorporated by many Muslims.

Although bashing *Mutazalites* as the greatest evil in Islamic history is a fashionable pastime of everyone from Salafi Jihadists to 'Traditional' Muslims and 'Sufis' nowadays (any attempt at a defence results in instant anathematisation, as I am sure this piece will demonstrate), there is an important distinction to be made between the violence perpetrated by the *Mutazalites* and the subsequent abhorrent actions of the *Hanbali*/Traditionists. The persecution of the *Mutazalites* towards their opponents was in order for their ideology to reign supreme and therefore political in nature and not linked to their religious doctrine *per se*. The creed of the *Mutazalites* never taught this form of violence, which can be seen by their well-known dogma that justice is one of their 'five fundamental principles'. In the case of the traditionists, the (greater and more prolonged) violence was not only politically beneficial, but these violent tendencies are actually found within their doctrines and leaders.

A common theme amongst extremists (who, in those rare moments they take away from raping and crucifying people to consider such matters, are invariably anthropomorphists in creed), is that they either openly follow Salafism/*Hanbalism* or they display their affection and respect towards Taqi ad-Din Ahmad ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728/1328). Veneration of this individual is what unites many groups claiming to be disparate – from *Hizb Ut Tahrir* and the Muslim Brotherhood to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It is very much like how many Protestant groups within Christianity will decry other such groups, whilst at the same time holding Calvin or Luther in high esteem (and hating the Pope). Non-Salafists are

often challenged to 'prove' that someone or the other is indeed a 'Salafi' and Salafists, much like many other affiliations that wish to be seen as mainstream or speak for a larger group, dislike the appellation 'Salafi' or 'Wahhabi'. Likewise, for an outside observer, it is hard to see what unites, say, the Muslim Brotherhood with the Wahhabi Kingdoms that persecute them.

The answer would be this very late and idiosyncratic scholar, whose centrality to many of these movements is no more strange than that of, say, Joseph Smith to Mormonism as distinct from ordinary Christianity. Despite the very real and violent disagreements these groups have, they all give a disproportionate amount of attention to this previously obscure scholar, and likewise for Muslim groups that are of older provenance but are now kowtowing for pecuniary interest or relevance to the same ideas. It is not unusual to see in Islamic educational establishments, whether Al Azhar, various *Madrassas* around the world or indeed universities in the West, people demanding the prominent inclusion of this formerly anathematised scholar. The reasons for his importance to them – and by 'them' I mean the violent, regressive and isolationist tendency within Muslims as exemplified in our time by Salafism – I will argue are his literalism and anti-rationalism, as well as penchant for violence.

Ibn Taymiyyah[xvii] was infamous for anthropomorphist ideas, which he was instrumental in propagating. His doctrine was not accepted by orthodox Muslims, namely the followers of the Ashari and Maturidi

[xvii] Ibn Taymiyyah was a follower of one of the four Sunni schools of *Fiqh* (jurisprudence), namely *Hanbalism*. Therefore, it is claimed by many Salafists that they adhere to the rulings of Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal (d. 241/855). Despite this, there are divergent scholars with differing ideologies who also claim to follow Ahmad bin Hanbal, such as Ibn Qudamah al-Maqdisi (d. 620/1223), and even though they differ with Ibn Taymiyyah, they still held some anthropomorphic ideas, such as in the case of their doctrine regarding the physical Quran being uncreated.

schools. Nor was he accepted by his contemporaries. He exasperated the disagreement between him and orthodox Sunnis by attributing a literal upward direction to God [xviii] and his flagrant expressions of anthropomorphism, such as when he once relayed a *hadith* regarding the 'descent' of God while standing on the pulpit and climbing down two steps in order to demonstrate that the 'descent of God' was *"Just like the descent of mine".*[xix] In his books '*al-Aqeedah al-Hamawiyya*', '*al-Aqeedah al-Wasitiyya*' and '*Majmoo al Fatawa*' (amongst many others), he attributed a literal hand, foot, shin and face to God, and argued that God physically established himself on the throne (something which Imam Maturidi spends a huge amount of time in the present volume debunking – so again, I would invite readers to question why orientations *claiming* to be 'orthodox' and 'Sunni' and harsh towards ideological 'deviants', would nonetheless be so enthusiastic about including an individual who went against such a fundamental tenet of Sunni, and indeed Sh'ite, creed. It is again, like an alleged Catholic advocating for Martin Luther while claiming he is a senior Catholic authority).

He also applied spatial confinement and divisibility to God, claiming that if God is not divisible, then He cannot exist, and nor can He exist if He is not in a physical space. He narrated embarrassingly anthropomorphic *hadiths* such as from Qutada via Ikrima that the Prophet said; *'I saw my God in the image of beardless (man), with long curly hair in a green garden.* [xx] These are just some examples, which could (and have) been multiplied at great length.

[xviii] Al-Subki, Taj al-Din, *Tabaqat al-Shafi`iyya al-Kubra.* (Al-Matba'a al-Husayniyya, Cairo), Vol 9, p. 61

[xix] Al-Asqalani, Ibn Hajar. *Al-Durar al-Kamina Fi A'yan al-Mi'a at-Tamina,* (Cairo 2008), p. 154

[xx] Ibn Taymiyyah, Taqi ad-Din Ahmad, *Bayan Talbis al-Jahmiyyah*, (Dar al-Uthmani. Makkah, Maṭba'ah Al-Hukuumah 1972), vol 7, p. 290

It is relayed in a collection named *'Bayan Talbis Al-Jahmiyyah'* that he believed that anyone who did not conform to his anthropomorphist beliefs was a *'Jahmi'* (a common theme that was adopted by later Muslim scholars who would also call their anti-anthropomorphist opponents *Jahmis*). Even though his ideas were not accepted during his own time, they had a significant effect on Sunni doctrine.

It is their deep connection to anthropomorphists that explains why Salafists hold strongly to extremist ideologies; because this doctrine comes hand in hand with them, in that the source of both are the same. One merely needs to peruse the *'Majmoo' al-Fatawa'* of Ibn Taymiyyah (preferably while not tenured in a Western University at the pleasure of a Wahhabi autocrat): the book proliferates with rulings imploring that people should be killed for the smallest of infractions. For example, stating that killing a person who omits his prayers is more effective than saying that he has sinned; if a person insists on pronouncing the intention for prayer loudly, then he must be killed (this is despite the fact that in the Hanafi School, which is followed by most Muslims, it is *recommended* to recite the intention aloud if it helps one focus their intent to pray). There is even a case where in a *single* page of this lengthy work, Ibn Taymiyyah produces rulings that a person should be killed in *nine* instances, and again, for the smallest of violations; a person should be killed if he doesn't pray his prayer at the correct time, when he intends to miss a prayer and make it up later, when he prays without ablution, if he doesn't pray his obligatory prayers etc. etc.[xxi] It is no wonder whatsoever that ISIS relied on his quotations in their populist publications such as *'Dabiq'* from the very outset – as do Islamophobes.

[xxi] Ibn Taymiyyah, Taqi ad Din, *Majmoo al-Fatawa* (Makhtabak al-Malik Fahd 1995) vol. 22, pg. 236. See also: (https://sulaimanahmed.com/2017/07/28/isis-via-ibn-taymiyya-and-avicenna/)

This blueprint for extremism didn't begin and nor did it end with Ibn Taymiyyah, and not only because these examples can be applied to current extremist groups such as ISIS, which have the same 'kill first (don't) ask questions later' approach. Obviously, their leaders are attracted to a scholar who has a *laissez fair* attitude to killing such as Ibn Taymiyyah. Sadly however, this violent ideology is also found in a number of early scholars who came well before him.

Such is the strange case of Ikrima (d. 105/723), a famous early Traditionist (and yes, criticising him in the least will earn you instant anathematisation from many Muslims today) and prolific narrator of (violent) *hadith* who was well known for his own violent tendencies, such as his wishing to undertake the *Hajj* (pilgrimage) for the simple reason that he wanted to kill his fellow Muslims.[xxii] Taking these types of individuals as your moral or intellectual compass is, I hope, very obviously problematic.

Yet despite these lamentable character traits, he was accepted as a 'just and honourable scholar' by Traditionists, to the extent that what he relayed became law. Ikirma was responsible for narrating many *hadith* which are expedient for Salafists, such as the famous ones about killing apostates and burning homosexuals (recently enacted by ISIS). Ikrima is also very important to them since single chain (and hence unreliable) narrations form the basis for most of the bizarre creedal and juristic positions of the various extreme Salafist groups.

But again, to lay the blame for Sunni Islam being affected by anthropomorphism only on later people like Ibn Taymiyyah *et al* is also unfair because these ideas existed well before them. During the early stages of Ahmad bin Hanbal's life, as we saw, he was imprisoned by the

[xxii] Al-Dhahabi, Shams al-Din, *Siyar A'lam Al-Nubala'i,* (Darul Hadith, Cairo), pg. 22

Mutazalite Caliph Mu'tasim. But later, when the Caliph Mutawakkil took over and propagated Hanbali Islam, he brought Ahmad bin Hanbal into the fold, even asking him to teach his children.[xxiii] He was then allowed to propagate his ideology, and the main work that he produced was his '*Musnad*', a collection that has a significant number of *hadith* that are frankly anthropomorphic in nature, *sans* explanation.

The main issue that the *Mutazalites* (as I said, also often no saints) had with the Traditionists is illustrated by Al-Jahiz (d. 253/868), where he argued that the biggest problem during the period of *Mihna* was not the issue of the uncreated Quran, but rather that of anthropomorphism.[xxiv] Therefore, he implies that the anthropomorphists and those who believe that the Quran is uncreated were one and the same. In terms of Orientalist scholarship, Walter Patton as well as Anawati argued that Ahmad bin Hanbal was in fact an anthropomorphist himself.

Ahmad bin Hanbal was quite specific about what type of anthropomorphism could be attributed to God, so if something was not mentioned in Islamic texts, then he prohibited applying it to God. He famously condemned those who attributed 'form' to God as this was not mentioned in either the Quran or *Hadith.* On the other hand, if there was a tradition that anthropomorphised God or a verse of the Quran which when taken literally meant God had a form, he accepted this narration. For example, one merely needs to look at the traditions mentioned in the '*Musnad*' to see a large number that gave God a body or other created characteristics. Such is the narration that on the Day of

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[xxiii] Ibn Jawzi, Abd al-Rahman, *Manaqib al-Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal.* (Maktabat al-Khaniji. Cairo 1930), vol 7, p. 161

[xxiv] AI-Jahiz, Abu Uthman, *Risala Fi Nafy al-Tashbih, near al-Jahiz, Rasail al-Jahiz,* vol 1, p. 285

judgement, God will reveal His 'true form' to the believers, or that God created Adam in the 'form of God', sixty cubits in length.

It can be said in defence of Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal that this is not proof that he was an anthropomorphist and that he was merely relaying *hadith* that he had collated in his job as a *Muhaddith* (collector of *hadith*), and as such his sole responsibility is inspecting the chain of the *hadith*. It can be argued that he didn't look into the content of the *hadith*, and even if he did, the *hadith* should be considered in the same way as the Quran, in that when it is taken literally, it can seem to imply that God is being anthropomorphised, but like the Quran, the literal meaning is inapplicable. The problem with this is that for some *hadith*, Ahmad bin Hanbal was obdurate that if one didn't take the anthropomorphic understanding of God, then that person was either a heretic or a disbeliever. For example, regarding the *hadith* that Adam was created in the form of God, Abu Thawr (d. 239/854) argued that it meant that Adam was created in the form of Adam as opposed to the form of God. When this was relayed to Ahmad bin Hanbal, he argued that Abu Thawr held a deviant position and stated that anyone who reported that God created Adam in Adam's own form as opposed to God's form was a *Jahmi*.[xxv] This demonstrates that the anthropomorphist ideology runs deep within the fabric of Sunni Islam.[xxvi]

[xxv] Ibn al-Farra, Ibn Abi Ya'la, *Tabaqat al-Hanabila,* (Muhammad Hamid al-Fiqi, 2 vols, Matba'at al-Sunna al-Muhammadiyya. Cairo 1952), vol 1, p. 313

[xxvi] There is a clear difference between the Quran and *hadith*. The Quran is the word of God and the texts of the Quran that when taken literally seem to anthropomorphise God should not be taken literally according to the *Asharis*, *Mutazalites* and *Maturidis*. The *Asharis* and *Mutazalites* argue that one must make a metaphorical interpretation (*Tawīl*) or according to the Maturidis, one must not attempt to interpret the verses (*Tafweed*) as they cannot be understood, so one should accept it is a revelation, but deny any ascription to God that denotes similarity to created things.

Of course, people will use the hallowed ground that Imam Ahmad occupies amongst most Muslims to create hysteria over plain academic facts and pretend that presenting the Imam's views honestly is, ironically, an affront. This can be observed by the lengths some people will go to in order to 'protect' him; he is praised for actions which would be considered problematic by normal standards, such as his abrupt treatment of non-Muslims. It is relayed that whenever a Christian would walk by him, he would close his eyes and argue that he could not even *look* at someone who lied about God and lied to Him in turn.[xxvii] It seems this was imitated by his followers as well as Muslims affected by the ideas that were formulated by the *Ahle-Hadith*. This lack of integration and treatment of minorities is very obviously not a good precedent or legacy and the same goes for other prominent Muslim figures who did likewise: there is simply no sugar coating this. We sometimes must choose between critiquing our 'favourite' scholars and bringing Islam into disrepute. The choice should be clear to all people of any faith.

My aim in any case is not to 'disrespect' Imam Ahmad or any luminary: it is merely to present the facts. The field of Islamic studies is no longer occupied by 'respectful' teachers in Islamic *Madrassas* and if young Muslims are not taught frankly about the ideas and opinions of not only Imam Ahmad but any given scholar from the past or present, they are apt to find out from other sources the hard way - and the same goes for Imam Maturidi. In any case, if Imam Ahmad was not squeamish about expressing these ideas, then there is no need for us to be treading on eggshells either.

My broader point is that this link between extremists and 'traditionists' has resulted in people who don't follow this ideology either being

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[xxvii] Ibn al-Farra, Ibn Abi Ya'la, *Tabaqat al-Hanabila*, (Muhammad Hamid al-Fiqi, 2 vols, Matba'at al-Sunna al-Muhammadiyya. Cairo 1952), vol 1, p. 12

eradicated, as in the case of the *Mutazalites* (and Sufis and others in parts of the Middle East today) or their beliefs and ideas being deliberately and violently excluded (again, in the petro-monarchies and their metastases for example). Such was also the fate of al-Maturidi, and the same can be said for the Sufis as well. One needs to merely speak to a lay Muslim and he will invariably know Bukhari (one of the Imams of the Traditionists), but likely won't know al-Maturidi or the *Mutazalites* (except pejoratively).

With the increased access to reading material of *Ahle Hadith*, mass distributed from London to Lagos and beyond by the Middle East's officially and unashamedly sectarian Salafi-Wahhabi kleptocracies – with the blessings of all major Western governments, there has been a significant increase in the number of people who adhere to literalism, anthropomorphism and all of the harmful ideology concomitant to them. This includes a broad spectrum of people from those who are openly anthropomorphist to those who believe in these ideas without knowing or realising it. For example, many people who believe that God is 'everywhere', or that God comes 'down' to the lowest heaven, or that Adam was created in the image of God. This kind of belief is mainly due to people's close affinity with literalism and *hadith*.

This further explains, at least to me, why this book was never translated and nor was it taught in its original Arabic in Islamic institutes. This is despite the fact that there are hundreds of Islamic establishments in the UK and thousands more throughout the world professing to follow Maturidi doctrine: none, or very few, teach the book. The reason is likely its staunchly rational and anti-anthropomorphist doctrine, which the *Ahle Hadith*/Salafists detest.

Salafists are in fact aware of the obvious fallacy in their belief system, which can be seen from the unfortunate fact that many of them work in

inter-faith polemics and in order to refute their opponents in 'debates', they abandon these anthropomorphist ideologies and instead use the arguments of the *Mutazalites* and non-Muslims in order to prove that Islam is the correct religion. In a debate with a Christian they will explain that Jesus isn't God as something uncreated cannot reside in something created, as God would then be limited to a body and shape. The Salafist debater or person who receives his funding from Salafists will ignore the fact that they have the exact same belief and also ascribe location to God, just like the person they are 'refuting'. Instead, these slippery individuals will use the arguments of the *Mutazalites* (or equivalent ones from non-Muslim thinkers). And here lies the real confusion for many Muslims: they hold firm to *hadith*, they believe in anthropomorphist ideology (of course they refuse the appellation with various fudges that they don't allow their Hindu or Christian brothers such as 'God has a Hand but not like our hand' or 'He sits but without a how', to which one is forced to wonder why He can't incarnate or be part of the Trinity but 'without a how' – which is what the followers of these religions tend to argue anyway), but in a debate they will abandon these ideas to present the doctrines of the *Maturidis* and the *Mutazalites*. This demonstrates the internal conflict within Muslims. But in reality, it is the Salafists or those who conform to them that dictate the ideologies of Muslims today.

Al-Maturidi is the founder of one of the major orthodox Sunni schools which follows the doctrine of Imam Abu Hanifa - the earliest and hence most authoritative Imam of the Sunnis. In my previous book, I argued that Abu Hanifa's approach to *hadith* was being ignored and neglected for reasons of political expedience. Here I am forced to argue the same even for his theology. Yet to describe al-Maturidi as a 'follower' of Abu Hanifa would be a gross oversimplification because Abu Hanifa had

wide-ranging students that included the *Mutazalites*, *Murjia*[xxviii] and those who would become followers of the Maturidi doctrine. Instead, it is more accurate to say that he introduced and presented Maturidi theology to the Muslim world. The theological and philosophical methodology of al-Maturidi differs from his traditionist counterparts, which can be seen by the fact that he relays only a handful of *hadith* and instead his argument either focuses on the use of reason, or in the case of scripture, it focuses on proofs from the Quran. He is a sorely needed counterbalance in our times – troubled as they are like his own.

[xxviii] Imam Abu Hanifa was an enigmatic teacher who taught students from a wide variety of backgrounds. Those who learnt from him placed reason centrally. It was based on this that three branches of differing theological groups emerged from his teachings, the Māturidīs, the *Mu'tazalites* and the *Murji'a*, who despite differing in theology, followed Hanafi *Fiqh* (jurisprudence). Abu Hanifa's Māturidī students (even though they preceded al-Māturidī, their views aligned) were scholars such as Imam Muhammad (d. 189/805) and Imam Abu Yusuf (d. 181/798). The *Mu'tazalite* students included Abu Hanifa's son and his senior student Imam Zufar (d. 158/775). *Murji'a* students included scholars such as his senior student Bishr al-Marisi (d. 218/834). It was in the famous exchange of letters between Abu Hanifa and Uthmaan Al-Bathi that Abu Hanifa was attacked for holding to *Murji'a* doctrine (an allegation he accepted without hesitation). Therefore, it is quite plausible that Abu Hanifa held certain opinions that aligned with the *Murji'a*. The *Murji'a* were the diametric opposite of the famously violent *Khawarij*; they held that only God can judge if a person is a Muslim and therefore any conclusion made on this matter should be delayed for God to decide the outcome as to someone's theism in the Hereafter. Many of these teachings were later adopted by Al-Maturidi and formed a part of Sunni theology. The major point of contention between them and their opponents was their view that sin, which included major sin, had no effect on one's belief in God. Even though their position may seem inconsequential nowadays, they should be appreciated for being one of the main reasons for people not holding the notion that sin is equivalent to disbelief. For example, the *Khawwarij* held that major sin was equivalent to disbelief, the Hanbalites held that certain sins were equivalent to disbelief (such as simply missing prayers) and the *Mu'tazalites* held that whilst committing a major sin a person resides in a state of limbo between belief and disbelief. Hence, this position of the *Murji'a* was incorporated into Sunni Islam - to its great benefit.

A Short Biography of Shaykh Abu Mansoor al-Maturidi

His full name is Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Mahmud Abu Mansur al-Maturidi[xxix], and he was born in Maturid, a district in Samarqand.[xxx] The date of birth of al-Maturidi is unknown; he died however on 333AH/944 AC and was buried in Samarqand. Despite his date of birth being unknown, his age at death is approximated at ninety, determined based on the year of death of his teachers and where and whom they taught.

Al-Maturidi wrote many books in a number of fields, such as *Tafsir* (Quranic exegesis), *Tajweed* (Quranic recitation), *Aqeedah* (Creed) and *Usul* (Principles), with the number ascribed to him varying from sixteen to twenty-four.[xxxi] However, the only books attributed to him that have survived until current times are '*Kitaab at Tawheed*', the present book on theology, which is located in University of Cambridge Library; '*Ta' wilat al-Quran*', a lengthy book of Quranic interpretation which is located in various libraries throughout the world; '*Al-Maqalat*', a pamphlet in theology which is located in Istanbul and '*Risala Fima la Yajuz 'alayh fil Quran*', a work on Quranic recitation located in Istanbul.

Al-Maturidi's teachers include: Muammad bin Muqatil ar-Raz, who was the student of Abu Muti al-Balkhi, a *Murjiate* scholar who was the direct student of Imam Abu Hanifa and Muhammad bin Abi Hanifa, the son of Abu Hanifa (who was a follower of the school of the *Mutazalites*);

[xxix] Al-Qurashi, Muhammad ibn Abi al-Wafa', *Tabaqat al-Hanafiyyah* (Karachi, Mir Muhammad Kutub Khan, n.d), vol 1, p. 130

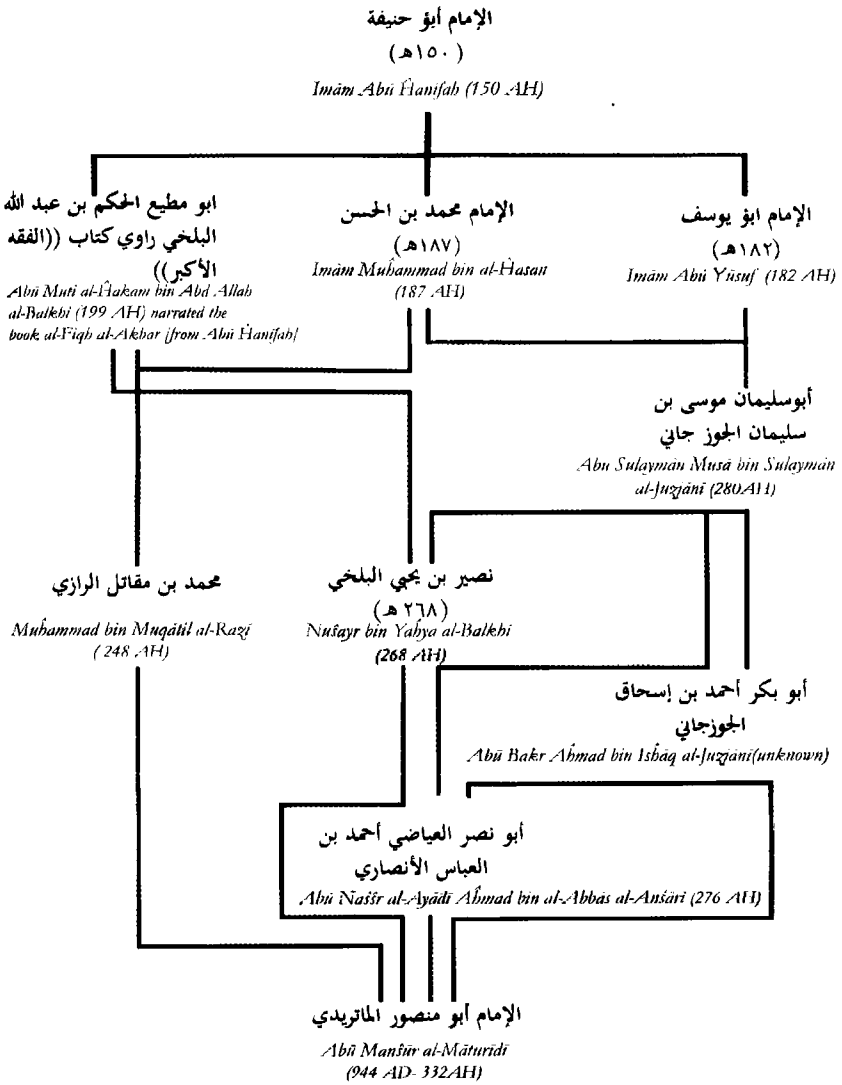
[xxx] Ibid vol 1, p. 244 and Amin, Ahmad, *Zuhr al-Islam*, (Cairo, Lajnat al-Ta'lif wa'l-Tarjamah wa'l-Nashr 1952), p. 265.

[xxxi] Al-Maturidi, Abu Mansoor, '*Tawilat ahl al-Sunnah*', (Baghdad, al-Irshad, 1983), p. 693 (see appendix)

Nusayr bin Yahya al-Balkhi, who was also the student of Abu Muti al-Balkhi, as well as Abu Sulayman al-Juzjani and Ahmad bin Is'haq al-Juzajani, who also studied with Abu Sulayman al-Juzjani and Abu Nasr al-Iyadi, another student of Abu Sulayman al-Juzjani.

Al-Maturidi's most significant contribution is that he is responsible for establishing one of the two main Sunni theological schools. Despite holding such a significant role in Islamic theological and philosophical thought, there has not been much analysis of al-Maturidi's ideas, even though he established his own school more than a thousand years ago.

Chain of Teachers from Abu Hanifa to Al-Maturidi


الإمام أبو حنيفة
(١٥٠هـ)
Imām Abū Ḥanīfah (150 AH)
ابو مطيع الحكم بن عبد الله البلخي راوي كتاب ((الفقه الأكبر))
Abū Muṭī al-Ḥakam bin Abd Allah al-Balkhi (199 AH) narrated the book al-Fiqh al-Akbar [from Abu Hanifah]
الإمام محمد بن الحسن
(١٨٧هـ)
Imām Muḥammad bin al-Ḥasan (187 AH)
الإمام ابو يوسف
(١٨٢هـ)
Imām Abū Yūsuf (182 AH)
أبوسليمان موسى بن سليمان الجوز جاني
Abu Sulaymān Musā bin Sulaymān al-Juzjāni (280AH)
محمد بن مقاتل الرازي
Muḥammad bin Muqātil al-Razi (248 AH)
نصير بن يحي البلخي
(٢٦٨ هـ)
Nuṣayr bin Yaḥya al-Balkhi (268 AH)
أبو بكر أحمد بن إسحاق الجوزجاني
Abū Bakr Aḥmad bin Isḥāq al-Juzjani(unknown)
أبو نصر العياضي أحمد بن العباس الأنصاري
Abū Naṣīr al-Ayādī Aḥmad bin al-Abbās al-Anṣāri (276 AH)
الإمام أبو منصور الماتريدي
Abū Manṣūr al-Māturidī (944 AD- 332AH)

Kitaab at-Tawheed

The manuscript of '*Kitaab at-Tawheed*' was made known to the public in the 1950s, after the University of Cambridge acquired it from Dr Sethian in 1900 (MS Add. No. 3651). It is the only known copy and therefore for this translation I have relied on this manuscript, which has been edited and published by Fathalla Kholeif.

In terms of its reliability, there are a number of passages quoted from '*Kitaab at-Tawheed*' by later Maturidi scholars that we can check it against. The style and structure also match the description of the book attributed to al-Maturidi by those that came after him. Despite this, there are instances where passages are quoted by scholars which are not found in the current manuscript of '*Kitaab at-Tawheed*', such as in the '*Tabsirat al-Adilla*' of Abul-Mu'in Maymun al-Nasafi (d. 438/1046). In that book, al-Nasafi follows the same structure and content as al-Maturidi's '*Kitaab at-Tawheed*', but has sections not found in our current manuscript. The same format was also used in many later books written by followers of the Maturidi School such as the '*Aqaid Nasafi*' of Abu Hafs Umar an-Nasafi (d. 537/1142).

My evaluation is that this manuscript is indeed the '*Kitaab at-Tawheed*' of al-Maturidi - even though there could be some errors or missing parts in the current manuscript.

Another point to consider is whether al-Maturidi himself wrote this book. When one observes the often haphazard structure of the book - its repetitive nature and so on - it gives credence to the theory that this was never meant to be the final comprehensive book. Rather, it is more likely that it was consolidated into one book by his students, or it could be that it was a series of smaller books, pamphlets or lecture notes that

were brought together to form one book. What supports this assumption is that in normal cases, Islamic scholars begin their books by writing lengthy supplications to God, but in this book, they are found in a number of places (such as in the case of footnote 403). In response to this theory, it can be argued that it was al-Maturidi's style to write a significant number of extra supplications - which can be seen from the fact that he ends numerous paragraphs with smaller entreaties, which generally speaking is to the detriment to the flow of the book.

I personally believe that this work was not meant to be in book format, but instead existed as notes from his lectures. These could have been systemised lectures, but were more likely Al-Maturidi teaching his students in an ad-hoc manner and they then wrote down his comments and talks which were later turned into a book. On the other hand, it could be a combination of both; smaller books and letters as well as his lectures all consolidated into one book. This would explain the lack of structure and the fact that a number of topics are repeated a significant amount of times.

In addition, al-Maturidi assumes that the person 'reading' or 'listening' to his book already has the pre-requisite knowledge about certain topics. If this were a book meant to lay out a creed to be imitated by his followers, it would have been written differently, with a better structure and a more systemised approach. There is also the possibility that the book was written over a number of years and this explains why certain topics are repeated.

Notes on the Translation

This is the first English translation of '*Kitaab at-Tawheed*' ('The Book of Monotheism'); it being the first half of the complete Arabic book. To the best of my knowledge, there are no translations of this book in other languages. Why only the first half you might ask? Because this to me was the most urgent and relevant part – dealing as it does with God and His Existence as well as the origin of the Universe. The time and resources taken to translate this extremely difficult work, as well as the feasibility of publishing what would necessarily become a huge tome, have gotten the better of many. Hence, I felt that the first and most important part should be made available forthwith. I wish I had the resources to complete the second half and hire academic editors and so on, but it is my hope that this work will serve as a guide to make the attainment of the second half easier for those who come after me, especially *vis a vis* Maturidi's somewhat obscure Arabic and difficult philosophical concepts that have been famously impenetrable. Of course, if sales and resources permit, I should like to do this myself. This translation can be used as a blueprint for those who may struggle to relay this work into English, even though they are able to understand Arabic, which is the multi-layered problem that academics have had with the work of al-Maturidi. I can ask no more than if this book were to become a guide and a roadmap for future scholars (and amateurs!) to engage with and translate the work of this great but sadly neglected scholar.

I make some uncommon choices when translating this book for a number of reasons. Al-Maturidi has a tendency to divert away from standard Arabic towards a Central Asian style, with very significant anomalies in Arabic grammar and sentence structure. This occurs throughout the work, which may be one of the many reasons why this

book has not been translated before and nor has there been a significant work on al-Maturidi and his doctrines (despite luminaries such as W. Montgomery Watt lamenting this omission long ago). He also uses uncommon terms in his work, for example, the Persian word '*Hastiyya*' for 'existence', as opposed to the various common Arabic terms. This also helps explain why this book was never formally taught in Islamic institutes or by scholars over the last eleven hundred years – despite their extensive use of its commentaries. In addition, certain theological and philosophical terms do not translate well into the English language; therefore, in order for the reader to understand the point that is relayed by al-Maturidi, there is a need for the translator to divert from the literal text and instead focus on conveying the meaning. I felt that conveying the meaning was more important than staying true to the literal text and providing an unintelligible translation. The profusion of my interpolations – clearly marked in parentheses – is also towards this end. No doubt the above will give ammunition to those who wish for theological texts to be inaccessible to the general public.

As a translator I was faced with the difficult choice of fidelity to the literal text and the readability of a book which is notoriously lacking in flow and readability even in the original Arabic. Exactness results in a more literal text but circumvents readability and comprehension, whereas a more liberal translation focuses on ensuring that the book can be read and understood. My approach was to try and focus on readability whilst also making sure that I did not divert from the text. This meant that I copiously deployed brackets or notes to explain the points that Al-Maturidi wished to convey. I make no apologies if the English often lacks literary merit, as this is simply unavoidable.

I have included some examples here of how I worked with the text so that it would be comprehensible for the reader. Here is a sample passage (and please note that this is not a transliteration):

'*And ignorance is evil, and if it is from that substance, so that is knowledgeable and wise by its substance, which can never be foolish and ignorant. Learning and seeking wisdom is the duty of those who do not have it. But if he is from the substance of evil so he will not get affected by it. Because he by his substance does not accept the good.*'

This passage was reworked to better convey the meaning and was expressed in the following manner:

'*Furthermore, they argue that ignorance is evil but [if something comes] from the substance [of Light], then it must be wise and knowledgeable and can never be foolish and ignorant. Learning and seeking wisdom is the duty of those who do not possess them, [which is considered good]. But [if a person] is from the substance of evil, then he will never be affected by [the good of learning and seeking knowledge]. Because [if he is from] the substance [of evil] then he will not accept that which is good.*'

Another example;

'*and so, the one being tested does not find a path to overcome it and turn it to what he desires except by summoning the promise and the threat, even if he sees this, it is easy for him to give up pleasures and bear great pains.*'

This was reworked in the following way:

'*and so, the [person] being tested does not find a path to overcome it and turn it to what he desires except using the motivation [of God's] promises and threats, even if he sees [the pleasures of this life], it is easy for him to give them up and tolerate great pains.*'

I expect much wailing and gnashing of teeth from some quarters over these choices, but I ask the reader to consider the naivety of such complaints in light of the complicated philosophy of translation that

besets any work, let alone a theological one that was not attempted for so long despite its central place in Islamic history for over a millennium. The main focus of the translator, in my opinion, is to convey the *meaning* of the text in the English language, so that the reader can understand and appreciate the point being made by al-Maturidi.

There are certain words in Arabic that do not have an exact translation into English, and therefore I make the decision to translate them in a very specific way. An example of this is the word *'Hādith'*; it doesn't have an exact counterpart in the English language and therefore different translators use a variety of terms to convey its meaning, such as 'origination', 'occurrent', 'transiently created', 'produced in time' and 'temporally created'. Therefore, based on these possible options, I chose to use 'origination' in this book. There are also some instances where I interchange between translations depending on the context of the point being made, and I did this so that the paragraph flows and the context is understood.

Furthermore, al-Maturidi has a tendency to make points without elaborating on the ideas that he is presenting - instead he makes the assumption that the reader will understand for a variety of reasons - such as at times he takes for granted that the person who is reading the book has the 'pre-requisite' knowledge of the topic or book that is being discussed. This is a common tendency amongst pre-modern Islamic scholars. I have attempted to overcome this issue by translating in such a manner that the information being expressed can be easily digested, and to add to this I include detailed notes that elaborate on the ideas, explain specific points and elucidate terminologies. Unfortunately, it is outside the scope of this work to provide a detailed explanation of the issues discussed (the background to the *Mutazalites* alone would require

a weighty tome), but I have strived to provide sufficient background to make the text readable.

I also felt that it was important that one who explores the book is furnished with a detailed explanation of the theology of al-Maturidi; therefore, my notes explain various positions in detail, even when the text merely touches upon them. In addition to this, I included a significant amount of the ideas of al-Maturidi which come later in the Arabic book in the footnotes. This was done in order to provide the reader with additional doctrines of al-Maturidi even if they are not within the scope of the translation (for example, I included the various theological positions on human free will in the footnotes, even though they are not in the first half of the original Arabic text). Again, my intention was for the reader to receive an in-depth understanding of Islamic theology, and more specifically the viewpoints of al-Maturidi. To this end, I present Islamic theological dogmas from a number of schools of thought - to provide the reader with a holistic perspective on a wide range of doctrines.

I refrained from providing a critical analysis of the strengths and weakness of the teachings of al-Maturidi for several reasons. One is that this book is the first ever translation of al-Maturidi's work, and therefore I felt that it was important to present his ideas to the public without imposing my own thoughts on his doctrine. Furthermore, it would have caused further delays in the release of the book, as this would have entailed a significant amount of extra work, and I felt an obligation to release this book at the earliest opportunity. Another reason is that a large proportion of Muslim readers in particular are prone to regarding any cross-examination of their favourite Imams as tantamount to heresy – not realising that they have themselves made numerous, often harsh, judgements when selecting one School or Imam over another; although

in this respect, not all Imams are created equal and the slightest criticism of the Imams of *Hadith* will lead to online and other anathematisation, whereas the Imams of creed and theology are often fair game. The degree of 'protection' afforded to various figures from Islamic history is nowadays more often a function of their utility in promoting populist and Salafist ideologies as well as funding and tenures obtained therewith as opposed to any inherent merit. In any case, Muslims in the West and elsewhere are fast learning the painful lesson that even if they are not willing to critically examine the ideas of various 'sacred cows', there are plenty of non-Muslims inside and outside academia who are more than happy to do so.

I also refrained from presenting the teachings of the *Ashari* School except in a handful of instances. The reason for this is that I wanted the book to introduce and explain the doctrines of al-Maturidi rather than it be a detailed analysis in comparison to the other theological schools. Furthermore, although Abu al-Hasan Al-Ashari (d. 324/933) was a contemporary of al-Maturidi, in all likelihood he never came across his opinions so as to attempt to refute them. Therefore, I kept the focus of the comments on the doctrine of al-Maturidi and the groups he does engage with in his book.

To give an overview of the scope and structure, the book begins with the topic of *Taqleed* (blind imitation) - an excellent opening salvo. It is clear that this was a problem in past times just as it is today; people blindly follow the statements and rulings of their preferred scholars without analysis or using philosophical inquiry to determine their veracity: and this when it is agreed upon by Muslims that *Taqleed* is invalid in matters of theology. His next chapter moves nicely onto the subject of how knowledge of the religion is acquired through transmission and reason. It displays that in contrast to the traditionists,

he valued the role of reason, whilst still respecting the importance of transmission.

His next chapter moves onto his epistemology. This was a significant contribution as it was the basis upon which later scholars within Sunni Islam developed their own ideas. It is clear from the book that a number of his doctrines have come from or via the *Mutazalites*; he mentions the ideas of Muhammad ibn Shabbib, a *Mutazalite* scholar, and one can clearly see how al-Maturidi's epistemology developed from the positions held by the *Mutazalites*. Those arguments that were not taken from them are obvious from al-Maturidi identifying his disagreement with their doctrine.

Al-Maturidi then moves on to his proof for the existence of God. He dedicates a number of chapters to this topic, attempting to prove the created nature of the Universe, its ontological structure and that there is only one God. He uses many arguments based on reason and revelation and therefore he provides the reader with a range of ideas. Despite this vital contribution, some of these arguments do need to be developed further in order to provide details. There are also some arguments that could perhaps be stronger, and even if they seem good based on comparing points relayed by other Muslim theologians, when one looks at arguments from Greek philosophers such as Aristotle and the likes of Avicenna and al-Ghazali, at times these ideas can lack detail.

Al-Maturidi devotes a significant number of chapters to providing proofs against the pre-eternity of the universe. These chapters were in response to the Greek philosophers who held this view, as well as the *Mutazalites*. Al-Maturidi is quite aggressive in his arguments, which was common practice for Muslim theologians when engaged in debate. Therefore, he repeatedly states the beliefs of his Muslim opponents are a 'denial of monotheism,' but I do not believe that al-Maturidi actually

considers them to be disbelievers. The fact that some of the book gives the impression that it was written as a response to al-Kaʿbī, as well as other scholars, means that they were likely engaged in a debate, and as we don't have the books of al-Maturidi's opponents, we are unable to determine the nature of the writing that he is responding to: were they for example equally aggressive, which would explain al-Maturidi's response?

Al-Maturidi also writes at length against the *Mutazalites* in a number of topics which included issues related to the attributes of God. The fact that al-Maturidi dedicates a substantial amount of the book to refute the *Mutazalites* needs some explanation since al-Maturidi has taken a number of his ideas from the *Mutazalites*. The branches of the *Mutazalites* doctrine come from Imam Abu Hanifa. Hanafi *Usul al-Fiqh*, which is followed by both of them, was also formulated on the basis of the principles of the *Mutazalites*, and both of them are anti-anthropomorphist. Therefore, the fact that so much of the book is a refutation of the *Mutazalites* could be for a number of reasons. Perhaps he felt that they were worthy opponents to engage in debate, whereas the traditionists didn't value reason, so discussions with them would necessarily focus on scripture. There were significant numbers of *Mutazalite* scholars in Maturidi's locality, and therefore he was possibly focusing his contribution on those he believed were 'his' opponents. It could also be that since the rulers at that time were anti-*Mutazalite*, in order to ensure that one's work survived, one had to make abundantly clear that they differed with the *Mutazalites* and hence al-Maturidi balanced his refutation of the *Mutazalites* with that of the anthropomorphists to avoid 'censorship'.

If there are any mistakes with the translation and accompanying commentary, they are mine alone. My intention throughout the book was to help support the reader, and as such, I did take some liberties

with the translation so that the content of the book could be better understood. The writing of this book was an enormous learning curve, and I hope the result is an enjoyable and informative read.

Finally, I can want no more than that the book opens the reader's mind to new possibilities and further research into the fields of classical Islamic philosophy and theology. I also hope that it provides impetus for further research for myself, other academics and the public into Islam and the ideas of al-Maturidi.

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In the Name of God, The Most Merciful, The Most Kind

All Praise is to the One, and if anyone else is worthy of any praise then even this [praise] goes back to Him – praises which are sufficient for His grants as well as His rewards that reach the point of pleasing Him. We ask Him to send salutations upon the one by whom the message has been finalised, upon his brothers the Messengers and upon all of the saints. We ask Him to protect us from any errors, and we are relying on Him to grant us the ability to use the correct terms and [the correct] deeds.

Religion Must not be Based on Belief in Authority (*Taqlīd*) but Must be Based on Evidence

[Shaykh] Abū Manŝūr said: In issues of faith we found that people were following various schools of thought and different religions. But all of them attested to one claim; that "what we follow is the truth and what others follow is falsehood." [Further,] most of them claim to follow someone who came before them.

This proves that one is not excused for performing *Taqlīd* [following someone without knowing the evidence].[1] This is because by *Taqlīd* another person [can quite easily] claim the opposite to what you have stated. There is no substance behind *Taqlīd* except that it consists of a large number [who have stated it to be so], unless they are following a person whose position is supported by reason.[2] [This is based on] reason which results in the just person having no choice but to accept it due to its truthfulness. The one who relies on proof for [issues relating to] his faith is the one who is following the truth. It is compulsory upon [each individual] to choose their faith by themselves and [as a result] know the truth. The proof should be such that when it is presented to them it is compelling to people [and so they accept it]. It should be of such a level

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[1] *Taqlīd* in this instance refers to issues related to theological matters. In current times, this problematic issue is present where people blindly follow their religious leaders and priests on theological issues, without researching and analysing the evidence for themselves.

[2] Shaykh Abū Manŝūr al-Māturīdī was the first theologian/philosopher of Islam to create a systematic approach related to issues of epistemology. There were works that made enquiries into epistemology written by the *Mutazalites*, but sadly none of these works have survived.

that a proof with similar [strength] is not present on the opposing side [of the argument]. [This is] because the [strength of the] evidence for the truth should be that which overcomes [the countering argument] and it must point out the errors and weaknesses of the opposing contention. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*[3]

[3] It is the habit of Shaykh Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī to end each section with an invocation to God. These are general invocations which are not related to the specific topic being discussed. These invocations will be italicised in order to differentiate them from the main body of the text.

Knowledge of the Religion is Acquired Through Transmission (*Sam'*) and the Intellect (*'Aql*)

Faith is tested and recognised by two methods: tradition[4] and the intellect.[5] –[6] This is because in order to find the truth, people must have agreed foundational principles that are accepted by everyone who uses them.

In relation to statements or tradition, there is no one who follows a particular ideology who does not encourage people towards their [own ideology]. Even the people who follow sceptical philosophy or a non-academic approach follow certain types of statements - never mind those who believe in empirical information. This is the way of the earthly rulers who govern the affairs [of their domains] by bringing the people together and ruling them. This is also the way of the people who claimed Prophethood and wisdom, as well as the people who worked with different kinds of arts. *God gives help and success.*

In terms of the intellect, the world being [created] solely [for the purpose of] destruction would not be [an act of] wisdom. An intellectual person acting imprudently is not acceptable, [similarly] the Universe [cannot] be

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[4] Shaykh Abū Manṣūr does not mean the literal word 'text' but in this section he is rather referring to 'statements', so he is developing the notion that a person can come to the truth by thinking and coming to the understanding themselves or by another person explaining the proof to you.

[5] In this book, based on the context, I will be using 'reason' and 'intellect' interchangeably.

[6] Where M-dash is used, it is to explain to the reader that this statement was made in the middle of the paragraph. Shaykh Abū Manṣūr uses the Central Asian style of making a linked statement mid-sentence rather than making the statement at the conclusion of the sentence. This is one of the reasons why many readers struggle to understand his books.

established based on imprudent action and [it cannot] have been created without any reason. – This is because the intellect is created as a part of [the cosmos]. If we accept this, then we know that the Universe is not created for destruction, but rather that it is created for continuity. The foundation of the Universe is based on divergent natures which [conform to one another] and have their direct opposite [natures],[7] this is especially the case in issues relating to the intellect.

In terms of dividing a thing that is amalgamated or connecting a thing that is disconnected, this is what the philosophers call the 'microcosm' (micro-cosmos). It is based on contradictory desires, divergent natures and the egos which are created in them and [attempting to] overcome them. If one was to leave them to what their nature is demanding, it will lead to disputes and conflicts, as each [person] will be claiming the benefits, ownership and kingdom for themselves, which would only result in hatred and wars. This leads to mutual destruction and corruption which opposes the wisdom of creating the Universe.[8] Another aspect to consider is that the Universe is created with bodies [or things] which support the continuity of both humans and animals. If the Universe had not been created for continuity, then creating something that [helps to] support its continuity would not be wise. This is why there has to be one agreed upon foundation that brings all [issues] together to stop all disagreements and disputes, and this will also stop

[7] Such as, for example, cold and hot or wet and dry

[8] Shaykh Abū Manŝūr argues that since a body has these divergent natures, there must be an external force that brings all these parts together into a coherent whole. Then since matter relies on something external, it must then be of a temporary nature. He also argued that the finite nature of bodies which we observe proves the finite nature of the Universe itself. We know the world consists of these finite objects as we observe that they come into existence after not existing, so they are also temporal – limited in time. Therefore, the Universe has bodies that are finite, and it is not possible to have objects which are temporal and infinite together.

[the resulting] destruction and evanescence. Therefore, based on one's ability, it is necessary to search for the foundation that brings all these things together. This is based on [a person's] ability to find the truth through contemplation and as a result come to the conclusion that there is someone taking care of the Universe who is aware of what they are doing - someone who supports their continuity, who created them to be in need and does not leave them alone in their imprudent behaviour - allowing their desires to take over, as they need to know what keeps them alive and what ensures their continuity. They have to possess the ability to know this without there being a need for someone to teach them this [information]. It is necessary that there be proofs [in the world] by means of which they will come to realise and appreciate their responsibilities. This basis will help to support the claims of people who accept the arguments of the scholars which [they in turn have deduced] based on contemplating the Universe and this basis will be the foundation for people to use [in order] to find the truth [using the intellect]. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Imam Abū Manŝūr stated that people disagreed about the method of finding the benefit and the truth and [being able to] distinguish between good and its opposite.

Some said that whatever comes into your heart is beautiful, and you need to hold onto it.

Some said that a human is unable to comprehend the reason [for his existence] and this is why he has to follow that which inspires him, because this is from the one who governs the Universe.

Shaykh [Abū Manŝūr] stated that both of these opinions are incorrect and are not acceptable in uncovering the truth. This is because using this method will cause obvious controversy and conflict within religion as all of them [can] claim that they are the people of truth. It is impossible that

the mechanism for finding the truth can cause such confusion because this will necessitate that falsehood can appear as truth. It is thus impossible to trust something whose falsehood is so obvious: Even if some people believe that it is the truth, the people opposing them do not.

As for using inspiration [to determine] that the people opposing them are wrong, [we use] the exact same proof [that was used against what the] people [who are] opposing *hima* (ability) are using, and these types of proofs cannot be used to disprove the opposite side.[9]

This is how it will not be acceptable for intellectuals to use this [as a proof] and the same goes for a random lottery[10] or a face reader [as a method of divining truth]. Also, forcing people to accept such argumentation cannot be valid, because arguments based on inspiration will be different [from person to person and time]. This is why these two ways cannot be the method [by which one can] find the truth. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

[9] Shaykh Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī is clarifying that *Ilham* (Inspiration) is not an accurate source for proof. As such, he is explaining that it is not valid for one to be using inspiration to support their argument and to justify that their opponents are wrong.

[10] Using a game of chance as proof for the validity of one's argument is flawed. It is common practice amongst certain groups in current times to partake in a game of chance to conclude which of them is on the 'truth', because they believe God will send a sign in support of the one who is right.

Humans Have Essentially Three Means of Acquiring Knowledge: a) The Senses, b) Transmission, c) Intellect

Shaykh Abū Manṣūr stated that the sources by which knowledge about reality is apprehended are: the senses, transmission and the intellect.[11]

As for the senses[12], this is the information that is gained by them which is the main source of knowledge and this does not have an exact opposite to it. Its opposite is ignorance. If anyone claims that there is an opposite, then he is known as a *'Mukābār'* [(the one who arrogantly denies something or is stubborn)]. Even animals do not reduce themselves to this state, because each animal knows what keeps it alive and what causes it to die, what pleases it and what displeases it. The person who denies common sense/sensory knowledge is denying even this.[13] People agree that there is no reason for discussion with a person who is postulating in such a manner, because nothing is ascertainable nor falsifiable according to such a person. He is denying dialogue about

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[11] Imam Māturīdī argues that there are three methods of acquiring true knowledge. The five healthy senses (hearing, seeing, smelling, touching and tasting), transmission (reports from humans and the Prophets) and the intellect.

[12] Shaykh Abū Manṣūr uses the word *'Iyan'* instead of the word *'Hawaas'* (which is the term normally used by theologians and philosophers for 'sensory knowledge').

[13] Sophistic philosophers have a wide range of views - such as those who deny the existence of reality, as well as the existence of bodies. For example, they would state that the external Universe is not real and the proof is that a dream can be quite complex, but it has no basis in reality. Others state that there is no reality, that there is no way of receiving and expressing information. For instance, the proof of receiving information incorrectly is when one person may describe a body as black whilst another may state that it is white; expressing information incorrectly is when a person relays information and later finds that the information presented was inaccurate as he had misunderstood the content he was relaying. Then there are those who state that you don't know about the reality of things, and you do not know that you do not know, and then you do not know that you do not know *Ad Infinitum*.

both the nature and the description of the issue. He is denying the denial too. You can merely make a witty remark and say "do you know that you are denying?" If he says "no" then he is denying his own denial. But if he says "Yes", he will be affirming his denial, by denying what he has affirmed [and therefore] he is denying his own claim. Or you scare him [with the threat of] significant pain by [threatening to] cut off his limbs so that he will stop pretending [to deny such things as pain experienced by the senses], since we know he has knowledge of his senses as it is common sense, but through his claim [not to], he is merely pretending and the [best] way of dealing with that type of person is by [doing] what I mentioned [which is] to scare them, so you will pretend [in the same manner that he was] - pretending so that he will stop pretending.[14] *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*[15]

Shaykh [Abū Manṣūr] said that transmissions are of two types. The person who denies everything [*vis-à-vis* transmission] will be one of the members of the previous group [that was mentioned], as he will be denying his own denial. This is due to his denial itself being a form of transmission, so when he will be denying [the validity of all transmission] he will also be denying his own denial. It will result in him [stating that he does] not know his own name, his lineage, his own nature and the names of everything. It will necessitate imprudence about the things he

[14] Despite Shaykh Abū Manṣūr disproving the position of his opponents, he did not provide a definition of knowledge himself. Although Imam Abul-Mu'in Maymun al-Nasafi in his '*Tabsirat al-Adillah*', as well as Imam Abu Barakaat al-Nasafi in his '*Sharh Umdah*', attributed the following definition to Imam Māturīdī '*It is a quality by means of which the concerned thing will be clearly disclosed*'; the mentioned thing can be something that exists or not.

[15] Here Imam Māturīdī is giving short shrift to those who deny the evidence of the five senses of humans, perhaps for example, Solipsists. Clearly, he sees the necessity of believing sensory information to be entirely self-evident and does not furnish a detailed argument in this regard apart from regarding the opposition as time wasters.

is experiencing, and the inability of expressing what he has seen. So how is it that he will gain knowledge of things which he did not observe when he is denying the [existence of] knowledge that he observed himself? Also, how will he know issues of his livelihood and sustenance, since all of that is gained through transmission [from others]? This [attitude] will result in the demeaning of the huge grants from God towards him, the things for which he [should] be grateful and the things that make him different from animals. This is the apex of stubbornness.[16]

[Shaykh] Abū Manŝūr states that by using these two methods, one is unable to grasp either the positive or negative [information] which the intellect is responsible for comprehending, and this can't be done except by using speech to express, explain and listen to it[17]. The method of having a dialogue with the person denying this - even though debating with these types of people is foolish – is that we joke with him when he denies and we ask him "what did you say?" So, if he repeats his statement, then you know that he has in fact accepted your transmission because it was your transmission that was questioning him. If he does not repeat [his statement] then you will have avoided his scepticism and you will thank God and you will make fun of him[18].

The same goes for a person who denies sensory knowledge: you ask him 'what did I just say?' and if he repeats it then you know he knows [the

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[16] Shaykh Abū Manŝūr is saying that when information has been disseminated based on a fabrication, that does not mean that all information acquired based on reports is defective but instead this is a temporary defect based on this particular inaccurate information being reported.

[17] i.e. transmission

[18] Again, Imam Māturīdī is making fun of people who he feels are such sceptics as to deny all forms of testimonial evidence, as this would lead to a person disregarding even the language of the question in his example and hence preclude all discussion with them – not an undesirable outcome according to him.

information from his hearing] and is pretending. If he does not repeat it then you have avoided his scepticism and you should thank God for inspiring you. Or you can scare him by beating him or giving him pain[19] and he doesn't have the right to be annoyed or to blame you because he has to describe what you did and that is known by transmission - and he has already denied the validity transmission in general. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

It is necessary to accept transmission based on reason in the same manner that it is necessary to accept the transmission of the Prophets. This is because their transmission is more reliable in its truthfulness and is supported by obvious miracles. There is no transmission from the remaining sources of knowledge for which the listener feels tranquillity which is more reliable than the transmission of the Prophets. Because rejecting the above-mentioned sources of knowledge is a sign of stubbornness, thus rejecting the statements of the Prophets requires an even greater degree of obstinacy and duplicity.[20]

The reports which come to us from the Prophets are passed on by people who can make errors or fabricate, because they do not have any

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[19] Obviously, Māturīdī is being humorous as opposed to saying that one should *literally* hit one's ideological opponents -- much as in the manner of debates in western philosophy, where the position of solipsism or perhaps extreme idealism (denying that the physical Universe exists but allowing for the existence of one's mind, a belief much like that of some solipsists, who would say that one could not be sure that one was anything other than a 'brain in a vat' receiving sensations artificially, as in a dream) that is being discussed here was sometimes threatened with a kick to the shin as a refutation. Māturīdī is mocking his opponents by saying that he could administer sound thrashing and they would neither feel it (as they deny that pain has any reality since it is from the sense of touch) and nor could they complain about him, since that involves transmission - and they themselves would not believe anyone's transmission.

[20] Shaykh Abū Manṣūr argues that if reports based on sensory information are accepted, then the reports of the Prophets have a much stronger reason to be accepted because of the signs and proofs that they present.

proof for their protection from such errors and fabrications, nor do they possess proof of their infallibility. In that case, [the information they testify to] has to be tested, to examine if it is coming from a source from which lies cannot be found; then we have to approve and accept what the transmission is presenting because of its protection [from falsehood], and that is the description of *mutawātir* [21] [massively attested] transmission. This is because even if there is no proof of their protection from error or lying individually, when the transmission reaches that level [*mutawātir*], its trustworthiness is established and its protection from lies has been accepted, even though individually the opposite of this is possible for each of them.[22] It is the same for the issues which are known by *'ijtihād* (independent legal reasoning) - even if error is possible in each of them individually, when they come together their precision is confirmed[23]. This is because the intention and egos of human beings conflict and their concerns are controversial - except for the one who is protected by God, who can manifestly show the truth and protect creation. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

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[21] The linguistic meaning of *mutawātir* is 'sequential'. In *Hadith* terminology it means that it is narrated by such a large number of people in each generation that it would be impossible for them to all collude on a lie.

[22] Imam Māturīdī could be directing this against some of the *Mutazalites* (and not the majority of them) such as An-Nazzam, who denied the authenticity of *mutawātir* narrations. His beliefs were that one person can convince a number of people to collude on a lie.

[23] Shaykh Abū Manṣūr Al-Māturīdī seems to be approving of *Ijma* (broadly meaning 'legal consensus') but in a very specific sense. He is equivocating *'Ijma'* with his definition of *'mutawātir'* - which means that for *'Ijtihadi Ijma'* it would require a large number of independent scholars from a variety of backgrounds who could not have come together to collude on a lie or influenced one another to conform to a misunderstanding.

Another type of narration is the one that does not reach this level in terms of necessitating certainty[24] and in terms of knowing it is the truth from the merciful Prophet. [In this case] it is necessary to act upon it or reject it based on *'ijtihād* and testing the descriptions of the narrators by considering the possibility [of the truthfulness or falsehood] of what he is claiming in his transmission and then acting based on the strongest probability - even if this can be wrong. Because this is possible in those issues related to sensory knowledge from which the highest level of certainty [is achieved], [therefore] we can act on something which is established by weaker senses. Considering acting upon or rejecting something, neither of these need to be based on knowing comprehensively. Whichever of them you [decide to] chose, you will be rejecting the other transmission, and this is the [reason] why it is necessary to act by *'ijtihād* on one of two opposing testimonials.[25]

The bases on which it is necessary to use *Nažar* (speculative thought)[26] are the following: One of them is requisite in the field of sensory knowledge and transmission, because of those issues that are beyond the

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[24] Information can be either *Ðarūrī* (obvious) or *Nažarī* (speculative thought or requiring further analysis). *Ðarūrī* is something about which you don't need to think such as 'one plus one equals two'. *Nazari* requires thinking, such as '3 times 9 plus six equals thirty-three'.

[25] Shaykh Abū Manŝūr al-Māturīdī is relaying his principles of dealing with Prophetic narrations. If a narration does not reach the level of *Mutawatir* (which gives one customary certainty) then it requires one to deploy *Ijtihaad* (legal independent reasoning) in order to determine its authenticity. Once the truthfulness or falsehood of the narration has been verified, based on strong possibility, the report is then either accepted or rejected.

[26] Shaykh Abū Manŝūr uses the words '*Aql*' (intellect), '*'Istadlāl*' (deduction) and '*Nažar*' (speculative thought) to present issues related to the intellect and arguments based on reason.

reach of the senses, and because in terms of transmission there are certain types of testimonies that may be true or untrue.

Being able to distinguish between the miracles of the Prophets and the illusions of magicians and being guided by the Prophets is within the ability and specification of the person who is receiving the signs because of their being able to differentiate between the light of truth and the darkness of falsehood. This is what God referred to in the Quran when it was said that humans and *jinns* will not be able to produce something similar to it: *"We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth"*[27], where He stated *"Then do they not look at the camels - how they are created?*[28] In another verse [in the Holy Quran]: *"Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and earth, and the alternation of the night and the day..."*[29] and in the verse *"By looking into yourselves, you will find evidence to the presence and powers of God."*[30] And in the many verses [of the Quran] requesting one to contemplate and analyse and ordering [people] to think and to reflect. He informed them that this is the way that will lead them to the truth and make the true path clear. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

The people who deny the intellect have no evidence to deny it except by using the intellect in the first place. This demonstrates that to deny the intellect they have to in fact use the intellect. It is necessary to recognise the wisdom in the creation [of the Universe] as it is not possible that it was created without reason.[31] It is necessary to recognise the wisdom in the creation [within the Universe, such as humans] as it is not possible

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[27] Quran, Surah *Al-Fussilat* (41:53)

[28] Quran, Surah *Al-Ghashiyah* (88:17)

[29] Quran, Surah *Al-Baqarah* (2:164)

[30] Quran, Surah *Adh-Dhariyat* (51:21)

[31] Imam Māturīdī dedicates a significant chapter later in the book on the issues related to the wisdom of God.

that this was created without a reason either. This is proof of the one who created it and it also proves that if it does exist by itself, then it is either created or pre-eternal. All of this is known by the intellect. It is the duty of humans to govern creation, to struggle for it and to explore what is logically the best thing for it by giving preference to that which is beneficial and to avoid that which causes harm. This cannot be done without contemplating – by using the intellect. The intellect is the only source that can be used to clarify any obstructions or issues that are caused by doubt. All of this describes the true nature of things and [the things that] lead to [this understanding]. This is the same as when colours are confused and the eyes clarify them, when voices are confused but the ears are able to distinguish between them and how each of the senses clarifies the things that they have been created [to clarify]. This is [one of the usages] of the intellect. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

The ability to distinguish between the things that benefit or harm and the positive and negative acts is established by reason – this is after the senses have described it and its various angles have been explained by the transmission by which they were all created. The issues that have been mentioned above can only be disclosed by the intellect. This is how one is able to recognise beneficial and harmful things. Humans are created based on their natural disposition and the intellect. The intellect may determine something is good and yet this is different to the [person's] natural desires. The intellect may determine that something is bad but this is different to what the person naturally finds repulsive.[32] It is also possible in certain instances that the intellect and nature may agree

[32] The intellect ensures that a person is able to reflect and think, so that he does not fall into the oblivion of his own cardinal desires.

or disagree, and this is how the intellect determines which of the two [(good or bad)] something is.

Proof for the Created Nature of the Universe: The Ontological Structure of the Universe

Shaykh Abū Manŝūr said that the proof for the creation of bodies is demonstrated by the same three evidences which were mentioned for the sources of knowledge. In terms of transmission, it is that which is established by God in a manner that it cannot be replicated by someone else.[33] This is because [God] has informed us [in the Holy Quran] that *"He is the creator of everything"*[34], that He is *"the Originator of the sky and earth"*[35]and the *'sovereignty of what is in them belongs to Him'*[36]And we have spoken about the stipulations for the acceptance of [the truth of these] testimonies. There is none among those that live that claim that they are pre-eternal or even refer to anything that could mean [that they are] pre-eternal and if someone was to do so, his falsehood would become apparent.[37] For all [created things] that we have observed in their youth [and adulthood], we have witnessed their beginning, which proves that living bodies are originated. As for the things that are inanimate, then [their existence] is under the control of the living bodies. *Allah is the one who supports.*[38]

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[33] Shaykh Abū Manŝūr is referring to the Quran, that it is itself a miracle that proves its own veracity, in terms of its literary nature as well as its preservation.

[34] Quran, Surah *Az-Zumar* (39:62)

[35] Quran, Surah *Al-An'am* (6:101)

[36] Quran, Surah *Al-Ma'idah* (5:18)

[37] The premise of one of the arguments based on scriptural proof of Shaykh Abū Manŝūr al-Māturīdī is that the Universe exists, God has stated that He created all things, therefore God created the Universe. No living being has claimed that they are eternal. Substances are not eternal; therefore, substances are temporal.

[38] Al Māturīdī presents various evidences for the proof that the Universe is created. They begin with the fact that God revealed through reliable transmission, namely the Quran, that He is the Creator of the Universe. He then moves onto explain that based

As for the senses, everything that can be sensed is surrounded and is finite, and it has been created such that it is in need. [Something existing from] pre-eternity is that which has no need and it is because of its pre-eternity that it cannot be in need. [This is due to the fact that it] being in need or being compelled or forced, results in it being in need of something else - which necessitates that it is originated.[39]

Anything that is naturally ignorant of something that benefits it when it is damaged, then it is potentially [but not naturally] perfect. This is if it is alive, but if it is inanimate then it is under the control of that which is alive. This proves that each of the two are in need of the other. Whenever the "other" is proven or established then this necessitates *Creatio ex Nihilo,* because the existence of the "other" cannot be pre-eternal. [40] All sensible things unify in themselves divergent and contradictory natures, the specific properties of which would cause them to repel and disperse from one another. The fact that they remain together, proves that their amalgamation was caused by something else. This is proof that things are originated.[41]

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on empirical information, we have observed that each living body experiences the beginning of their existence, and inanimate objects are under the control of living bodies. Therefore both of them cannot be pre-eternal.

[39] He then argues that the finite nature of bodies, which is established based on the senses, means that they are in need, and anything whose existence relies on something else cannot be pre-eternal, which means that dependency and need necessitate an external being.

[40] Shaykh Abū Manṣūr is arguing that whenever something is relying on another for its existence, that thing necessitates that it is originated, that all things are imprudent and incapable of stopping themselves from being corrupted. If this is the case for living bodies, then that it is even more the case for inanimate objects. In this case both of them are in need as such both of them are temporal.

[41] The fact that things with divergent and contradictory natures combine together proves that the cause is something that is external to them.

The Universe has [many] parts and we know that most of these individual parts are known to have come into existence (after having not existed) and that they grow and expand. This must then apply to the Universe, because the sum of the finite pieces cannot be infinite. Which would mean [that the Universe is] originated.

Furthermore, the Universe contains both good and evil, small and large, benefit and harm, light and darkness. All these opposites are signs of change and decay, and this change and decay is annihilation and evanescence. This is because it is known through observation that something contracting or amalgamating proves that it had previously been divided. When something is divided, then what we have now is evanescent. All of this is proof of evanescence and anything that is evanescent cannot exist [independently] by itself[42]. It is necessary for what has been mentioned to have a start point. It is illogical for one to claim that something can disappear from sight but is not evanescent, because the Universe is known through observation, and one cannot claim [that something is] pre-eternal based on testimony or observation. Now [that the creation of the Universe] has become evanescent, it means one cannot observe its [being brought into] existence which does not mean that [that the Universe] is no longer present. This includes what we previously mentioned [in terms of the weakness of the argument].

[42] Al-Māturīdī is explaining accidents changing from one to another such as light and dark. The shift from light to dark means that the light ceases to exist and when the rotation of the Earth changes, the darkness also disappears. Anything that ceases to exist and relies on its opposing accidents to exist cannot be eternal or exist by itself.

There is no difference between the life that is evanescent and the body that holds this life.[43] *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Based on reason, each individual body is either in motion or at rest, and both of these states cannot simultaneously occur in a body. [In terms of the body], some of its time is occupied by motion whilst some of its [time is occupied] by being at rest. Each individual body that occupies a part [of time] is finite. Therefore, if neither the motion nor rest are simultaneously pre-eternal then the both of them must have come into existence and non-existence. The impossibility of them being pre-eternal signifies that they are temporal. Therefore, both motion and rest are accidents, and it stands established that [since bodies] cannot exist without [motion or rest], then they are originated.[44]

Each body is either at constant rest or in constant motion, or it is periodically in motion or it is [periodically] at rest. Whichever of these two it is, another influence affects them and in this manner they are useful for the needs and benefit of others [than themselves]. If this is the description of an inanimate body [it is even more the case for a living body]; it signifies that it is not self-sufficient and is therefore created. Therefore its state is not because of itself but because it was created to be like that. As such, if the nature of bodies is proven, then living bodies

[43] Imam Māturīdī explains that the Universe contains things with divergent natures, which are signs of change and evanescence and that this leads to annihilation. Anything that is subject to change and affected by annihilation cannot have come into existence by itself.

[44] Al-Māturīdī is presenting the argument that when a body is in motion, then rest ceases to exist and similarly when the same body is at rest, motion ceases to exist. Therefore, both of them do not exist pre-eternally together. As such, both are temporal and the proof of this is their evanescence.

that are in need of such inanimate bodies can therefore only be created.[45] *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Another proof that the Universe is not pre-eternal is based on its descriptions, such amalgamation and separation, motion and rest, benefit and harm, good and evil, increasing and decreasing - according to the senses and reason all of which are originated. This is because two opposites cannot come together; therefore they alternate in their existence, which proves they are originated[46] [and] that these accidents exist after not existing. It is in this way that these things cannot be separated from the Universe and nor can they precede [the Universe]. Or they were originated from a source who possesses these [accidents], or they began to change by becoming a changeable thing. If these occurrences are established, then it stands established that the Universe is *Creatio ex Nihilo* and it nullifies [the doctrine of] those who disagree about its origination. But if it is neither of these options, and rather it is from the one who created the Universe then that is what we claim, that He [(God)] is the Creator. However, they[47] call it *'Hayūla'* (raw, pre-eternal matter). Instead, if this occurs by [the Universe] moving it, then that which originally [occupied it] is no longer there, because it has been

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[45] Imam Māturīdī is proving that constant or periodic motion is the result of another, and if this is the case for an inanimate object then it is even more the case for a living body.

[46] One of the stronger arguments of Shaykh Abū Manṣūr against the pre-eternity of the Universe is based on the temporary nature of accidents, such as in the example of motion and rest. He explains that it is not possible for matter to have neither motion nor rest; one of these attributes must exist at one time, which means that at least one of them must be temporary, and as they rely on one another, then the other opposing accident must also be temporary.

[47] Here Al-Māturīdī is referring to the Greek Philosophers who proceeded him that believed in the existence of *Hayūla*. His arguments on pre-eternity do not touch upon the pre-eternal model of the Universe presented by Avicenna and Averroes who came after him.

moved into, then that is *Creatio ex Nihilo*. It signifies that the subsequent one is also originated, since it appeared by moving into the initial one, bearing in mind that something cannot come from another thing without it being camouflaged within it. It then appears or it comes into existence after not being or comes into existence by being born and [as such it] appears, or the first one ceases to exist and the second comes into existence. An example of the initial existing thing would be a child or a thing which is hidden within a container. It is not possible for it to be larger than the thing in which it is contained. In the same vein, it is impossible for a human to be inside of a sperm or a tree to be inside of a seed.[48] This is the opinion of the people who say that the appearance [of a thing] is not natural, but instead it is optional. This [position] is incorrect because it would be necessary that one of the reasons [for its existence] is the thing itself as its existence is natural and not optional.[49] Or its initial existence will be originated, such as the [initial existence of the] sperm [which precedes the] human and so on. So, the initial [existence] is originated until it ceases to exist, and then the subsequent thing is originated, and there will be no sign of the preceding one, which proves the origination of [both] the preceding and subsequent thing.[50]

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[48] When Shaykh Abū Manṣūr is referring to the child being inside sperm or the tree being inside the seed, he is referring to the *literal* tree being inside the seed and not the *potential* tree being inside the seed.

[49] Here al-Māturīdī is arguing that there is a contradiction in the doctrine that the Universe came from Prime Matter, and the resulting Universe is an *optional* consequence of this, as opposed to a *natural* consequence. Nonetheless, they also claim that one of the reasons for the existence of the Universe is the Universe itself, which they argue is a natural occurrence.

[50] Māturīdī argues that the existing things come into existence through *Intiqall* (a process of transition) from potential existence to actual existence and that the first existent transitions into the second, where the first ceases to exist. Nor does something camouflage its existence in another thing. That which actualises its existence from potentiality is God.

If one were to enquire as to the difference between [this and the] infinity of the things after the Day of Judgement [i.e. abiding forever in Paradise] since they are not infinitive in themselves, so then why is it that [one states that it is] not possible that something that is not pre-eternal in itself can yet be eternal? We respond with several reasons. *Creatio ex Nihilo* is [that it has an] existence after not being, so if it was not there previously [and then it came into existence], then that is actually [what is] known as *Creatio ex Nihilo.* As such, claiming in this situation [that it is a type of] pre-eternity is contradictory. The meaning of infinity [as in perpetual existence in the Afterlife] is existence in a new time for something that did not exist before, so this is how it is different [to the concept of pre-eternity].[51] Another reason why it is incorrect is because infinity [of existence in the Afterlife] is something that is set up by scriptural evidence - either you accept [the scriptural evidence as a proof] and therefore its origination is established, or you do not accept the scriptural evidence and as such this [specific proof] will not be relevant.[52] *And God helps.*

Furthermore, if the existence of something relies on the existence of something preceding it, and this is the condition of all of the things [that precede it], then it negates all of the [preceding things]. The proof of this

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[51] The eternity in paradise can be compared to a staircase with a beginning but an infinite number of steps. Pre-eternity on the other hand is like a staircase on which one finds oneself that has no beginning and extends infinitely in both directions, up and down.

[52] Here al-Māturīdī is explaining that the second evidence that life after the Day of Judgement is eternal is based on scriptural proof, and with scriptural proof if you accept that specific text to be true, then you would accept that the Universe after the Day of Judgement is eternal. On the other hand, if one doesn't accept that specific text as proof, then this evidence will be void. The Imam is likely explaining this issue because in Islamic theology there are schools of thought as well as individual scholars who do not believe in the eternal duration of reward or punishment in the Afterlife.

is that if you say to someone 'do not eat anything until you have eaten something before it' and [if] this same condition is applied to everything else [that precedes it], this person will remain in a state where he never eats anything. But instead, if someone were to say [to the second person] 'eat something after [having eaten] something [previously]', this person will be continuously in a state where he is eating [without a break] and this would be the basis of an increase in quantity. If there is no start point from where it begins, then it cannot exist. But if there is a starting point, then it will continue to exist, increasing indefinitely. *There is no strength except by God.*

Moreover, all numbers have a beginning - they become whatever they do because they had a start point. But [numbers] do not have an end point, and that is how the two differ from one another [meaning pre-eternity and infinity]. Even if one were to surmise that there were no bodies and only accidents, which had other accidents that pre-eternally proceeded them, none of these accidents can occur as long as there is no start point, but they can [on the other hand] exist infinitely without an end [if they do have a start point].[53] *Allah is the one who helps*

Also, each single motion and combination to which we refer, is the end of what preceded it, and it is impossible to have an 'end' without having a 'beginning'. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God*

It is also possible for a body to be described as *Baqa* (existing in perpetuity) if it has only one [turn] of continuing to exist, even if this perpetuity does not continue. But bodies cannot be called pre-eternal even if they change once, never mind them changing a number of times. The perpetuity affecting a body is why it continues to exist. It remains

[53] Shaykh Abū Manŝūr argues that each sequence, such as the numbers, must have a beginning but they do not need an end. Without a beginning, nothing would exist in the first place.

as long as the perpetuity is continuous within it. It is not possible that the reason for the pre-eternity of something can be linked to [or affected by] an accident.[54] As a result of this, body and pre-eternity become linked and it is the reason as to why one cannot come before the other.[55] *And Allah helps.*

The people who argued for these positions[56] and criticised our point asked the question that why is it not possible that something will come into existence with no colour, and that it will [never] be affected by colour? This [question] is flawed, because the actual meaning of origination is that you are describing the existence [of something], after it not being in existence. If this other thing will come into existence without it being detached [from its body], and it has this description [existing after not existing], then it is necessary that it will have the same ruling of [origination as the body]. The [accident of] colour is not a description [of a body] because it came into existence [simultaneously] with the body. This is the reason as to why they are both different. But a large number of bodies cannot be detached from colour, and that is why it [seems like] the body does not come before the colour. But instead the body will come before [the accident of] one colour which is

[54] al-Māturīdī argued that there is no body that exists separately from accidents. These accidents are in turn dependent on bodies. Therefore, neither of them can exist on their own and instead they rely on the other for their existence. As such, there must be something that is external which brought them into existence.

[55] Shaykh Abū Manṣūr argued that bodies can continuously exist because they are always affected by perpetuity, which is an accident. For them to be pre-eternal there would need to be an accident which is similar. This is not possible because accidents are temporal and therefore it means that the body they affect is also temporal.

[56] That bodies and accidents cannot be detached from one another

replacing the other colour and so on,[57] and this is what we know as *Creatio ex Nihilo.*

The one who argues that we don't know of anything [in the present Universe] that was *Creatio ex Nihilo*[58] is making an analogy based on those things that can be sensed. But the analysis [pertaining to the temporal or eternal Universe] is itself outside of the [realm of the] senses. Furthermore, when they claim that the existing things disintegrate but never cease to exist, that it is something that is known as well as evaluated.[59] He might affirm all of this, because when there is a body which can apply reason, can hear, see and has a soul etc., but does not know the reason for his creation, it leads [a person] to make any conclusion that pleases him. In addition, if we have not been informed about the pre-eternity of something or if a particular pre-eternal body is a part of the Universe, there is no way of knowing [about its pre-eternity] except through analysis. [If one were not to use speculative thinking] then we wouldn't know [the reason for] writing without a writer, or division without someone who divides. The same may be said of motion, rest and everything else in the Universe. This can be seen by the wondrous composition of the Universe, where the Universe is amalgamated and separated, and it did not amalgamate or separate

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[57] Because within the body, one accident will be replacing another - such as in this example one colour will be replacing the other in the body. So for instance, in a red shirt, over time, the accident of the redness begins to fade and eventually disappears as it is replaced by the accident of whiteness.

[58] al-Māturīdī is referring to those people who believe in the pre-eternity of the Universe and argued based on empirical information that we have not observed with our senses something that is originated from nothing.

[59] Shaykh Abū Manṣūr also argued that based on our senses we can observe that the Universe is not eternal, because we observe that a body depends on being a body and is dependent on accidents for its existence. Eternity is not dependent on anything because by its nature it must be independent, therefore the Universe cannot be eternal.

except through something else [who created it]. Therefore, everything in the present Universe, including it compositions and writings, comes after the thing that has caused it [to come into existence]. As we have mentioned, this is the [nature and flow of] the Universe.[60] *Allah is the One who supports us.*

It would be difficult for people to list all of the proofs [that show that the Universe existed after not existing], because there is nothing in the Universe which can be sensed or heard that does not show signs of existing after not existing [i.e. shows signs of coming from nothing]. [That which is originated] does not know its [own] beginning, how to repair itself, or reproduce itself, or [is aware of] the inability to maintain itself, or [being able to] transform itself. [Not to mention] other signs, such as being helpful and being unhelpful. All of these things would not [have an] affect unless there was some other thing [that was] affecting them.

In the present Universe, it is known that motion and rest, amalgamation and separation, are all distinct from bodies. This is because it is possible that there are separate bodies which then come together, or [the body] is in motion and after that it comes to rest. Because if this [act] were to occur on its own, it would not be affected by the opposite state of the body.[61] It is on the same basis that something ceases to exist or is infinite.

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[60] Māturīdī is presenting his argument by making the distinction between bodies and accidents. He says that motion and being at rest, durability and destruction, amalgamation and separation, are all accidents which are different to bodies. We know through our own observations that motion follows rest, and that amalgamation follows separation and that something coming into existence follows non-existence. These 'accidents' cannot be the same as the main body which is the 'body', because if they were the same then the bodies would not be able to hold two opposing qualities such as motion and rest. Therefore, this clearly shows that bodies and accidents are two very different things.

[61] Such as motion after being at rest.

It is possible that something does not exist and then [later] comes into existence. Or that something can come into existence but will continue to exist infinitely. For something to remain [in existence] or to cease to exist, it will be acting differently. That is how we know that existing for an infinite duration and [something] ceasing to exist are two different things, which occur due to something external and not the body itself.[62]

Many of the *Mutazalites* accept the first part of the argument, but deny the argument pertaining to something remaining or ceasing to exist. The refutation of their argument is if it can remain [in existence of its own accord] then this also signifies that it can come into existence by itself and not [by being brought into existence] by something else. Their argument does in fact conform to their own principles, because they do not engage God with the Universe, except with the Universe in its entirety. This is because they make the attribute of [God's] Will a part of the Universe. They include the *Fi*[63] (active attributes) as a part of the Universe. According to them, the *Dhāt* (the Essence of God) existed and there was no Universe, and then nothing occurred except that the Universe came into existence. If it came into existence by itself and remains [in existence] by itself, then this is the refutation of *Tawhīd* (oneness of God).

After this, there was a change that occurred [to the body] and the theologians disagreed regarding the essence of the name of that change. Some of them called it *Ard* (accident) whilst others called it *Sifaa*

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[62] Al Māturīdī argues that everything that can be sensed in the Universe will cause a person who reflects to come to the realisation that he is not pre-eternal and instead he was created.

[63] Here al-Māturīdī is referring to *Al-Sifaat al-Filiyyah* (Active Attributes [of God]). The *Mutazalites* do not accept that God has these specific attributes, as they believe that it would mean that God has parts. Instead according to al-Māturīdī, they include these attributes of action as part of the Universe and not as part of God's universal actions.

(description). In fact, in reference to this issue, we should not get fixated on what terminologies people use to describe it; rather [we should focus on] clarifying their meaning. Hence, any of the terminologies that are used to describe it , because the names [of things] cannot be understood by reason or by analogy. This is our response to the argument of Kaʿbī[64] where he stated; 'if it is not a body [then] it is an accident.'

[Shaykh] Abū Manŝūr stated that this argument can only be correct if the entirety of creations except for bodies, are accidents. But in the book of God, *Ard* is used in reference to actual bodies/matter, such as when God says *"You desire the worldly matters"*[65], also God says *"Had it been an easy matter."*[66] Based on this, it is better to use the word '*Sifaa'*, as this more closely aligns with Islamic terminologies. *There is no power but God.*

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[64] Abu al-Qasim Abdullah Ahmad was born in Balkh and as such was known as al-Balkhi. His family were patrons of the tribe called 'Kaʿb' and in many theological books he is referred to as Kaʿbī. He was a famous *Mutazalite* scholar who died on (931/319 AH) and a contemporary of Shaykh Abū Manŝūr al-Māturīdī and therefore many of teachings are presented and refuted in this book. Kaʿbī's own books '*Ayun al-Masail*' ('Sources of Questions') '*Maqalat al-Islamiyn*' ('Articles of Islamists') are considered lost. Many theologians who came later such as Ali al-Jubbai dedicated long passages focused on refuting Kaʿbī.

[65] Quran, Surah *al-Anfal* (8:67)

[66] Quran, Surah *al-Tawbah* (9:42)

Proof that the Universe has a Creator

[Shaykh] Abū Manṣūr said: [One of] the proofs that the Universe has a creator lies in the fact that it must have been originated, as we have already explained, and in the fact that there is nothing in the present world which is amalgamated or separated by itself, but rather by something other than itself.[67]

In addition, if the Universe had come into existence by itself, there would be no time which is more suitable for its existence than another time, nor would there have been a state that is more appropriate than another state, nor would there have been a characteristic [or quality] more apt than a certain other characteristic [or quality]. But since the existence of the Universe has a specific time, state, and characteristics, it stands established that its coming into existence is not by itself. Furthermore, if it had been permissible for the Universe to come [into existence] by itself, the Universe would have created the best time, state, and characteristics which in turn would have eliminated all the evil and corrupt things [from the Universe]. Therefore, the existence of these things is proof for its coming into existence by a being that is other than itself. *He is the One who supports.*

Furthermore, everything in the Universe is categorised into two things - inanimate and animate objects. All animate things are ignorant at their inception and are incapable of reproducing or repairing themselves in order to attain the apex of their strength and perfection. This proves that they came into existence through [the action of] something other than

[67] Shaykh Abū Manṣūr argued that we know of the existence of the Universe based on sensory knowledge, but proving its existence is not based on the senses and instead it relies on the evidence that the Universe does exist, that it must have been created and that it follows laws that control it.

themselves. Therefore, [this supports the proposition] that the inanimate component of the Universe has an even greater right to meet the described conditions.[68]

In addition, all things in the Universe, through force, are affected by a variety of changes, and these changes that affect them do not exist by themselves and cannot exist without [the Universe]. This proves that each of them is also in need of the other, [i.e. substance and being affected by change are interdependent]. So, it cannot exist by itself when it needs something other than itself to exist.[69] *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Furthermore, if it could exist of its own accord and would remain [in existence] by itself, then it would remain in the same [unchanging] state. Since this does not happen [as the Universe is subject to change], then we know this change is by something other than itself.

If it is [kept in existence] of its own accord, then its [existence] occurs by itself after it has come into existence, which signifies it did not come into existence by itself. Because it [either] came into existence through [the action of] something else, or it already [existed] by itself. But how can something bring itself into existence before existing? Then it would be necessary that a non-existent thing is acting, which is impossible. The proof of this explanation is the existence of buildings, writings and the construction of ships, which could not have come into existence unless some doer came before them.

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[68] These arguments for the existence of a Creator of the Universe are independent of our experience of the Universe.

[69] Imam Māturīdī argues that the accidents in the world continue to change, from rest to motion, separated things amalgamating etc, and that it is not possible for things to change autonomously. For example, the colour of a shirt doesn't change by its own volition. As such, there must be an eternal cause that brought about that change.

[Shaykh] Abū Manŝūr said that the Universe did not come into existence by itself is shown by the fact that nothing in it is lacking wondrous wisdom and a marvellous signification, which the scholars are incapable of grasping as to its essence and manner of existence. In fact, every one of the [scholars] is aware of the deficiency of their wisdom and knowledge in grasping the true nature of that. Hence, this limitation as well as others, are signs of the wisdom of the originator and creator of the Universe.[70] *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Furthermore, if the Universe could begin existing by itself, then there will be a point at which it will also stop existing. Since this is not the case but rather it evolved gradually, then this change occurred through something other than itself, such as when living things cease to exist, separate bodies amalgamate, something that is small becoming bigger, and evil things becoming good. Such is the way in which all things change, as they could not have subsisted pre-eternally.

As such, this points to the Universe's existence being due to something other than itself.[71] Because if it can exist by itself, then it can change by itself, such as for example the colour of garments can [then] change by themselves and not through [someone] applying colour to them, or ships can be constructed and shaped into their [final] condition on their own accord and not by something other than themselves. If this does not occur, then there has to be someone knowledgeable who creates them in this manner, who has the ability to create them. It is from this

[70] Shaykh Abū Manŝūr proposes that a pre-eternal Creator can be proved from the nature of created things as He has left signs in the Universe for one to analyse and conclude that there is a Designer. But despite this, there are still certain things within the Universe that cannot be grasped with certainty by scholars.

[71] These arguments for a Creator of the Universe are based on our experience of it.

perspective that we are [analysing] the way in which things occur. *And God is the arbitrator of success.*

It is impossible for the Universe to come into existence by itself because of the knowledge and power that is contained within it, which cannot exist out of ignorance and inability. How can something come into existence if it did not exist?

The proof that the Universe came into existence from nothing is that it is created.

The Issue of the Creator of the Universe Being One

[Shaykh] Abū Manṣūr said: The proof that the creator of the Universe is one and not more than that is based on reason as well as tradition, and the transmission (proof) of the Universe.

As for transmission, it is based on the general agreement among the people irrespective of how many creators they claim [to believe in that] they all agree that the Creator of the Universe is One. As for those who posit that there is more than one creator, they say so based on the assumption that the [number] 'one' is the first [term in a series of numbers]. Just as [the number] 'one' is the beginning of the numbers, in the same manner it is the name of [God's] Power, Prestige and Grace. This is similar to when it is stated that such-and-such is 'the one in his time' and he doesn't have a second in his prestige, virtue and grace. Therefore, nothing more than that can be used, because more than that and anything above that, are simply numbers, and numbers are infinite.[72]

The explanation of the numbers is that numbers are infinite and [therefore as a result] gods are also infinite, which would make it necessary that there are an infinite number of universes. That is because if each one of the gods were to create one Universe, then it will result in an infinite number of universes, which is not possible. Furthermore, if each one of the infinite number of gods were to create one Universe, it would result in an infinite number of originations and that is also impossible. In reference to the quantity of numbers, they can increase

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[72] Al Māturīdī is arguing that in terms of those who believe in more than one creator; they still believe that the number one is the first number in the series of numbers, in terms of the beginning of those numbers.

or decrease[73], and [one number is not] superior to another, nor is [one] number more appropriate than another number, and it is due to this reason that the proposition of an infinite number of gods is not accepted.[74] *And God is the One who supports.*

Furthermore, there is no claim of Divinity that was mentioned from any god except that which was narrated and accepted by the polytheists. Also, there is no proof that has been mentioned by them which would force [one to believe]. In addition, there is no indication that [they sent emissaries with] signs which were found [by the creation] and there is no other thing that is in the present Universe [that would indicate a proof]. There is nothing in the present Universe which would point to [their proposition], and there has been no emissary that they have seen with evidence which overcomes reason and forces it [to accept]. This demonstrates that any other claim for the existence [of other gods] is based on misconception and delusion.[75]

In addition, [the fact that] the Prophets were able to bring proofs which convinced those who received [the evidence]; if there would be a partner [to God], then this [partner] would be able to prevent [the miracle or proof of the Prophet] from being expressed. No one has been able to stop these miracles from occurring, even though there are many stubborn people who would love to have prevented them. The fact that the Prophets were able to [deliver the message without any

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[73] There is no number that cannot be increased or decreased, therefore it is invalid that there can be more than one creator of the Universe.

[74] Shaykh Abū Manṣūr is using the evidence of finiteness to prove the oneness of God. If there were an infinite number of Gods and each of them were to create, there would be an infinite number of creations and universes, which is not possible. Furthermore, it would result in a contradiction, in that there will be an infinite number of originations.

[75] Shaykh Abū Manṣūr also argues that we only have revelation from one God, that there are no other Prophets or signs that claim the existence of other Gods.

apprehension] proves that there is one and only Creator, who prevented the totality of stubborn and arrogant people from deceiving and preventing the truth.[76] *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

[76] al-Māturīdī is attempting to argue that if there were other gods, they wo prevented God's revelations and their failure to do so indicates that there is God.

The Issue of the Creator of the Universe Being One Based on Reason

As for [a proof based on] reason, then the existence of the Universe would be based on the compromise [of the other gods], which conflicts with the [the very nature of] being God. A further proof [against multiple gods] is that what one would want, the other would not want, and whatever one wishes to create, the other would not want it to exist. This will [result in a contradiction between wanting] its continuity and wanting its annihilation, and that is how [it would cause] conflict and contradiction. Therefore, the existence of the Universe proves that the creator of the Universe is one. What we have witnessed from sovereigns [in the present Universe] is that they do their utmost to overcome those who are similar to them, so that the strongest one [from them] can remain in control. Also, each one of them would try to enforce his own command and do everything in his ability take the kingdom for himself. As that did not happen [in the case of God and the Universe], and only the kingdom of the Majestic and Wise God was established, it stands established that He is the One. This is what is meant by the following verse [of the Holy Quran], where it is stated *"tell them Muhammad, if there were a God besides the One God as they are claiming, then these Gods would try to take control."*[77] Our first explanation is demonstrated by what is meant by the following verse *"If there would be Gods beside the one Allah, then the sky and earths would get destroyed."*[78]

If there would be another 'God', he would demonstrate his wisdom by separating his creation from the creation of God, so that his dominion

[77] Quran, Surah *al-Isra* (17:42)

[78] Quran, Surah *al-Anbya* (21:42)

and strength would be appreciated. As this has not happened, it signifies that God is unique in His Divinity and His dominion. This is what is meant by the following verse [of the Holy Quran]; *"if there would be God beside him then each of them would take charge of what he has created"*[79] also God says; *"Do they believe in partners of God who created as God created?"*[80]

Furthermore, such a compromise signifies weakness and imprudence, and if this were to be the case, then none of them would have the right to create except by overpowering the rest of the gods and subjugating them [to his will] so that they were under his ownership and domain. *And God is the one who helps.*

If there are other gods beside the One [God], then it will mean that [either] the gods are able to do to the other gods whatever pleases them [without any restriction], or they are unable to do [whatever pleases them]. If each [one of the gods] can do [whatever pleases them], then each of them can [deceive] the others, which disproves their Divinity. If none of them are able to do whatever [pleases them], then it signifies [that] all of them are not omnipotent, and this lack of omnipotence disproves their Divinity. On the other hand, if only one of them can do to the others [whatever pleases him], then that one is God, and the others are created.

Therefore, [He is] the one who has the knowledge of the *Ghayb*[81] (everything) and the knowledge of Divinity. The one who does not have this [knowledge] is created.

In addition, either each one of them is able to affect the others by stopping them from doing whatever pleases them, or he is unable to

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[79] Quran, Surah *al-Mu'minun* (23:91)

[80] Quran, Surah *ar-Ra'd* (13:16)

[81] *Ghayb* can mean 'the unseen', but in this context it is referring to having knowledge of everything.

[stop the others], which will prove that each one of them can be compelled to become powerless, which signifies weakness and negates his divinity. On the other hand, if only one of them is able to [affect the others then in that case] He will be God.[82]

Furthermore, in terms of proof from [the perspective of the] creation, if there were more than one God, then there would be a disruption in the natural processes of the Universe. For instance, the periodic change of the seasons such as [from] winter to summer, or the changing of the plants from growth to the releasing of sprouts and leaves, or the system of the sky and the Earth, or the rotation of the Sun, Moon and stars, or the [various types of] nourishments of creation, and the maintenance of animals. This entire process is controlled by one complete system, and the system cannot have more than one controller. As such, it is necessary that God is One.

Moreover, another proof is from the different types of created things based on their variance and distance from one another, such as the sky [from the] Earth or the different parts of Earth [from one another]. They are connected such that they benefit one another. That which grows on the Earth receives sustenance from the sky.[83] The maintenance of all of the cities that are spread throughout the Earth,[84] which includes the livelihood of humans who are spread [throughout the various cities] in a range of ways, such as by way of their different professions, which is the case for all things. If there would be several Gods, then the benefits

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[82] Imam Māturīdī argues that it is impossible that there would be more than one God because then it would result in a form of compromise, which is either a compromise in one's actions, power, rule or control. Any form of being stifled would mean that being could not be God, and the one who is not stifled is God.

[83] Such as rain benefiting the plants that grow on the Earth.

[84] It means that someone is maintaining all of the cities that are spread throughout the world, such as rain being sent for crops etc.

of the Universe would not be mutually shared by all things in the Universe. This proves that He who is controlling all of it is One. Furthermore, the issues that I have mentioned - such as the times of the night and day, and the [fact that they are] connected to each other proportionally - this is what is most likely meant by the following verse [where God states] *"you do not see in the creation of God any controversy."*[85] In addition to this, all bodies [are limited] by directions, and they are of different types, which are controlled by one God who controls this as one harmonious system. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Another proof is that there is no body that carries out a range of things from only one perspective, such as being affected [by only] harm or benefit, [by only] good or evil, [by only] hardship or ease. Anything that is bad, from a different perspective has its good side. The rest of the attributes as well as [the created] things are the same, which is that [something] is not harmful from all perspectives nor is [anything] beneficial from all viewpoints. It signifies that the One who controls it all is the One who did not make something evil from all viewpoints nor did He make something good from all aspects. This indicates that these varying [and conflicting] aspects of bodies cannot have come from themselves, nor could they have come from several gods, so that each god is creating one aspect of the body.[86] *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

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[85] Quran, Surah *al-Mulk* (67:3)

[86] Shaykh Abū Manṣūr argues that opposing aspects that come together in one body cannot have done so expect by one creator. Nothing in the world has only one aspect, such as nothing is completely good or completely bad, instead a body holds both opposing aspects. The fact that there are these opposing aspects in one thing means that someone must have created these things together. Also these opposing aspects could not have been created by different gods, because then the aspect controlled by

In addition, we find that all bodies with their divergent natures coexist. This should not be the case and instead they should repel one another, because of their contentious and contradictory natures. If they would have been left alone it would have resulted in [their] annihilation. This signifies that the one that is in control of it all is the one who unifies it by His Knowledge. [Also, each aspect of the body] avoiding harm from one aspect to the other [aspect], which is based on His perfect wisdom that cannot be comprehended. But if there would be several gods, this would result in clear conflict and contradiction, as each of them would try to repel the other and would attempt to display his own [specific] creation.[87] *God is the grantor of success.*

All issues connected to monotheism and polytheism are related to descriptions and actions. In terms of descriptions, if there are several gods, then they will be equal in terms of their Divinity, which will result in conflict and contention. Bearing in mind that [Divinity] is [in all cases] the description of the One, which [in this case] some [people] are attributing to the many [gods]. On the other hand, they will not be equal, and therefore the most perfect One will have the right to Divinity. In terms of actions, so that is what I have [previously] explained about the harmony of the Universe despite [its parts] being naturally divergent and contradictory, nonetheless [they] support each other to remain [in existence]. If it is in this manner, then its composition with its divergent natures cannot be [unified] except by the Wise and Knowledgeable Creator, who is the One who does not contradict *Taqdīr* (giving

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the stronger god would take precedence and as such all bodies would hold only this one aspect.

[87] All bodies have conflicting natures that should repel one another. The fact that they don't repel and are instead unified in one body means that someone else must have brought them together. That creator of these bodies has to be one, as has been explained in the previous footnote.

everything its due worth). If the argument of Oneness is proven with the meaning of being unique and not the meaning of the number, then we should speak about God being free from anything that is similar to Him or opposite to Him, and that is because oneness of number will exclude the possibility of being in parts. If you believe that someone can oppose God, then it will negate His Divinity. Also, if you believe that someone is in His likeness, it will negate His Oneness. This is because all created things have something that is similar to them, as well as something that is opposite to them. These two things – namely similarity and dissimilarity, prove the possibility of annihilation and evanescence, and therefore negates the oneness of the created things. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

God is One and does not have something similar to Him; His infinite existence does not have an opposite, nor will the One [God] have something that is equal [to Him] and that is what is meant by the verse *"nothing is in His similarity"*.[88] The basis of this argument is that anything which has [something that is] equivalent to it or similar to it is engaged under the [premise of being a] number. At a minimum there will be two of them and anything that is dissimilar to it will result in [its] annihilation, because one of the two opposites will be evanescent.[89] It is in this way that everything that has an opposite to it will disappear. Also, anything that has [something which is] similar to it results in it being more than one. Therefore, the meaning of being 'One' is uniqueness in Glory, Power, dissimilarity and not having an opposite. That is why the arguments of [God] being matter, body and accident are void, because these are the [attributes or conditions] of substances. If this argument is

[88] Quran, Surah *as-Shuraa* (42:11)

[89] This was also the position of the *Mutazalites*. For example, in his *'Intisar'*, An-Nazaam argued that two opposites cannot come together in one substance by their nature, and if they have indeed amalgamated, then it must have been due to something else.

established, [then] all of the attributes of creation will be negated from Him. *And God helps.*

It shows the stubbornness of the *Mushabayha*[90], and it is the reason for the misguidance of the ones that are erroneous by comparing God to that which is present. Also, some of them considered He is a body, denied Him being the creator of the Universe and claimed that the Universe existed pre-eternally.[91] Some of them attributed change to Him but denied [that] He came into existence after not being, and claimed everything beside Him came into being after not being; and these are the people who believe in *Hayūla.*

Muslims however described God and denied any attribute which is applicable to anything besides God, because an attribute which is shared by others will raise the possibility of differences [and similarity] at the level of the essence, as well as the differences [and similarity] in the attributes. It will open the possibility of transformation and change due to either an increase or decrease [in the essence or attributes]. If it is as we [have explained], then it is a type of the above-mentioned thing, and it does not occur except by someone shaping it, making it into what it is, in terms of its continuity of motion and being at rest. Or it opens the possibility of contention and conflict, which is the calamity of existence and may lead to its annihilation. On the other hand, it is the existence of someone who is similar to Him, which would void the attribute of perfectness, it would bring forth the possibility of His end, as well as [His] limitations, which necessitates the possibility of having something more perfect than Him or something that is less perfect than Him, someone who is more complete or less complete [than Him]. These are

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[90] *Mushabayha* are a group who anthropomorphised God. They also held the position that the Universe was pre-eternal.

[91] That there was no God and that matter is pre-eternal.

the proofs for the Universe being originated and the proofs of its Creator. If one of the attributes of the Universe was that it was the creator [of itself], then it would not be able to bring itself into existence - based on the condition that if its [existence] is through itself then this would necessarily cause the annihilation of the Universe. This signifies that [the Universe] is an indication of a Wise and Knowledgeable Creator who is free from things which are both similar and dissimilar to Him.

If something is originated in all of its aspects, and if the creator were to have an attribute which is similar to one of these aspects, then [the creator] cannot be pre-eternal in that one aspect, as such the Universe cannot also then be originated [by the creator] in that same aspect. Also, in terms of similarity in all aspects, it is not possible for the creation to exist in that manner because then the Universe would become one and unique.[92] *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Similarity is something which is only assumed and conceivable from one aspect; if God is similar to the creation from one of these aspects or perspectives, then [from the perspective of that] aspect it signifies God is like His creation.[93] *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

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[92] Shaykh Abū Manṣūr argues that if one aspect of God is the same as created substances then that would mean that God is not pre-eternal in that one aspect. If He is not eternal in one aspect, it means that He is not eternal in all aspects. Also, if the creation is the same as God in all aspects, and God is One and Unique, then this means that the creation is One and Unique, which is a contradiction.

[93] al-Māturīdī is attempting to explain that when a person considers one thing to be similar to another, you begin by looking at one aspect of the similarity. For example, if Person A has an aquiline nose and then Person B also has an aquiline nose, they are similar in that one aspect, and when you draw on comparisons in order to deduce similarity, you begin by doing it from one perspective. When you deem that Person A and Person B have an aquiline nose, you are stating that they are the same in that aspect. Thus, it is the same case for God and His creation: If you draw similarity in one aspect then in that aspect you are saying that God is similar to the creation.

[Shaykh] Abū Manṣūr said that as for attributing the names and Attributes to Him, this is not considered as [making] likeness [of God], because the nature [of these names and attributes] for the created things is something that is impossible in the Essence of God. But because there is no other way of presenting and describing God, except in this way; that is why [these names are] used in [the world] amongst us [the creation] and it is only possible to do so in this manner. This is because there is no other way of knowing the absent thing except via indication of things that are present, such as describing [something by the attribute/name of] 'Glory' and 'Prestige', because we cannot comprehend something except through naming it by something that is present and something which we observe [in the present Universe]. Also, we cannot fathom being able to refer to something which we cannot sense and something we did not witness. But we describe [God] in such a way that similitude will be avoided. Thus, when we say that He is 'knowledgeable' this is in no way similar to our knowledge. That is how we deal with the rest of the Names and Attributes by which we describe God.[94] *God is the grantor of success.*

In reality, the similarity only occurs in our imagination and not by our tongue and language. This happens due to us knowing the similarities between two substances, or two people, and [two] actions; [this happens by imagination and not for linguistic reasons] and that is the actual

[94] Māturīdī argues that when you name things, similarity is based on the mind as opposed to the words that are used. Because when we name two things with the same name, in our imagination they are similar. But in terms of God, He is not like anything in creation - so when the same name is used, it does not mean the same in its likeness. The reason why we use the same name is based on the customs of language, since we don't have any other way of referring to something except through naming it. As such, it is our restriction in terms of being created that we need to use the names which we know based on language. Therefore, we use these names with the added caveat that God bears no similarity to His creation.

reason for it. In this instance, that imagination is caused by [the action of] naming. The example of this is that if things wouldn't have a name by which they are known or by what they are described [we normally would not know them]. Also, if we knew God by His Oneness and believed that He is not similar to any of the existing things, even though He is the One, we wouldn't have to call Him by [the words] 'the One', since calling Him by using [the name] 'One' can cause the misconception of similitude [with the creation] through using this name. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

The philosophers who rejected the names and descriptions [of God] did not reject the attributes [of God]. Because in reality, if anyone applies the meaning of the attributes, he is [doing so to avoid] the *Tartīl* (opposing attributes), and that does not necessitate similarity[95], and that is the issue related to the names.

If they do not accept this, then how will they respond to the following questions: What do you worship? To whom do you call [for Divine support]? Which religion do you practice? Who is the one who ordered and forbade you? Who is the one who initiated the creation of the upper and lower universes? And by whom did everything start? [In order to answer these questions] they will use the meanings and words which are closest to being understood. Or [instead] they will join the ones who deny the Universe is created, or they will reject their own belief about the First Existing Thing, that it is the Mind or the initial existing thing or the initial [super being] or the rest of the names given to the [Creator]. This causes corruption, leads to imprudence and causes the denial of

[95] This is because the position is that we one can describe God by His Attributes without ascribing any similarity. One cannot describe the Essence of God, as God cannot be comprehended. Therefore, describing God in this manner was considered a form of avoiding similarity.

something that describes [a] metaphysical being. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Refutation of Those who Dispute our Teachings on Epistemology[96]

We have to mention some of the critiques which are addressed by people who are trapped by Satan, those who are denying very obvious knowledge. [These people are] trapped by their falsehood and the delusions of their enemy and not because God did not provide enough evidence. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

We say Satan has trapped the people who deny the senses, by being mistaken in their assumption, which causes them to be obstructed from their submission to God. [They are using weak] proofs [such as proofs related to] a person who has a defect in his eye, or one who is confused in his dreams or because of [looking at something from a] long distance or when [the angle of vision is] too sharp to see properly. But the trap of Satan does not work on this person [proffering these arguments] when it comes to the enjoyments [of life] and stopping himself from falling into these [enjoyments], and it does not work on him to prevent him from [being hurt by] harmful substances. [The abandonment of the authenticity of sensory knowledge] does not [stop him from] protecting himself from [being burnt by] fire or sinking in the sea. But if he would be truthfully imprudent [sceptical] he would not remain alive. And he would fall into the danger [of starvation] by not eating food. This proves

[96] This chapter seems out of place and would have had better flow if it had been placed earlier in the book where al-Māturīdī writes about epistemology and sources of knowledge. This could be due to an error in transcription from the students who were transcribing the content. Or it could be that '*Tawhīd*' was never meant to be a 'book' and instead these were notes from lectures from Shaykh Abū Manṣūr that were later collated into a book by his students. Less likely is that this was the intended positioning of the chapter by Māturīdī as he felt it was important to re-address the topic because it was an important issue during his time.

he made his claim only because he loves hedonism and is inclined towards caprices and what he has mentioned as a proof [against sensory knowledge] is of itself a proof that he [actually] believes in the knowledge of the senses.

According to [our opinion], we say with regards to eyesight, the person with an eye defect, someone who is dreaming, and the [person] who cannot see clearly due to [viewing something from a lengthy] distance or due to the small dimension of the object, then that person cannot reach certainty, [specifically] certainty by eyesight. But when these obstacles [which block accurate vision] are dispelled, he will gain that [certainty]. The certainty which is gained by healthy vision cannot be denied.[97]

As for people who accept visual information as well as their observations but deny transmission *(khabr)* by using the proof that people may lie, as well as the proof that although a transmission may be significantly widespread, we sometimes nonetheless find out it was a lie, [then we respond that] we know that pleasant things are proven by transmission and an intelligent person would not put himself in [a position] to test if the substance actually gives him joy. The same is said of harm from the harmful things which he has not tested [for himself] before; no one will put themselves in danger to test this but yet we know this by transmission.[98] The rest of the things which benefit or harm bodies as

[97] al-Māturīdī is explaining that perceiving something based on a defect in the senses is not a flaw in the information acquired based on healthy senses which are normally accurate, but instead it is rather something that blocks the senses from acquiring true information. Defective sight perceives things differently, such as man who sees things in his dreams that do not exist in reality. When these obstacles are removed, the true nature of the thing is revealed.

[98] For example, a person would not drink poison in order to test its potency to kill, as we are aware of the fact that it kills based on the transmission we have received from others.

well as their lives are known by testimony. That proves they are denying testimony only because of the prohibitions from enjoyments [that are religiously prohibited]. This group has been deceived by Satan as other groups [were also deceived] and what we said about the other category can be found also in this category. The reason some of the transmissions have falsehood contained within them is because of a defect in the person carrying these transmissions [as opposed to the transmission itself]. Or otherwise, many transmissions are well known as being truthful. Thus, we have to use some proof to find out whether a transmission is true or false, as neither side is given priority. *God is the grantor of success.*

Instead you can act with them harshly, by beating them to cause pain[99] so they will be compelled to accept that they actually believe in knowledge that cannot be gained [by any other avenue] except by testimony.[100] As for the people who accept the knowledge of the senses and transmission but deny the intellect, we respond to them that there are a list of worldly benefits and expected results which cannot be known

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[99] Once again, Shaykh Abū Manṣūr is obviously making his statement tongue-in-cheek as opposed to saying that one should literally hit one's ideological opponents, again mocking his opponents by saying that he could administer sound thrashing and they would neither feel it (since they deny that pain has any reality since it is from the sense of touch) and nor could they complain about him since that involves transmission and they themselves would not believe anyone's transmission.

[100] I am not able to fully determine the point al-Māturīdī is attempting to make, because by threatening someone, one can argue that it may give one an indication of his true belief - that he accepts information that is gained by way of the senses. But in terms of the reliability of testimony, this cannot be proven in this manner, and in fact evidence suggests that testimony gained through torture is unreliable. On the other hand, he could mean that a person will transmit that he is in pain due to the thrashing, which shows that in reality he accepts the validity of transmission, as he is transmitting that he is in pain to the other person. There is also a possibility that there is a flaw in the text, and it means 'senses' as opposed to 'transmission'.

by the senses and transmission and can only be known through analogy. Besides the fact that the genuineness of testimony and its falsehood can only be known by analysis, we ask such a person about those things that cannot be known by the senses, 'how would you know them?' If he says by testimony, then we ask him 'how do you know that the testimony is true or false?' And the same method is applicable to his knowledge of the benefits and harms which must be avoided, considering the fact that the use of analogy is necessary about those things that you see or hear, [so that you may] know the source of the Universe and its origination. In fact, there is nothing that stops one [from gaining knowledge] from analogy, transmission or the senses. He will [fall into the contradiction of] using analogy to refute analogy. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Indeed, a human or a fire or anything else which is seen only once, cannot be known except by analysing the [related] issues which are known by observing those things. But if one does not use the [mechanism of] analogy, this will necessitate that one would not build on that [acquired] information. Also, he wouldn't accept the testimony of anyone because he doesn't have any proof that this person giving the transmission is one from whom testimony [would or would not normally] be accepted. So all of this is necessarily known by analogy. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Deducing That Which is Present From That Which is Absent

[Shaykh] Abū Manṣūr stated that people differed as to the *Dalalah*[101] (signification) of the *Shahid* (present) from the *Gha'ib* (absent).[102] Some people have posited that [the present thing] is like the [absent thing]. This is because the [the present] is an *Aṣl*[103] (root) for that which is absent, and the *Aṣl* (root) does not differ from its branch.[104] In addition to that, the way of knowing the absent is by [knowing] the present; because when one uses analogy, it is to equate the thing to its equal. [By way of this reasoning] they have established the pre-eternity of the Universe, for the present signifies or points to its likeness. So then, the one that is absent from it has come to know it too. Then, [the present] always indicates or points to its likeness before it; and in that is the necessity of the pre-eternity of everything [according to them].[105]

Some of them argued that there is no [specific] time that is presumed to be the start of the Universe, but there is some other time that [has an equal possibility of being presumed to be the start of the Universe]. As

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[101] An analogical method that is used in various fields of study to derive unknown knowledge from the known facts. In the field of *Fiqh* (Islamic Jurisprudence) we have the *Aṣl* (foundation, root or known) and the *Far'* (branch or unknown). In theology there is *Shahid* (known) and *Gha'ib* (unknown) as well as *Ma'lum* (known) and *Majhul* (unknown). In Philosophy and logic there is *Muqaddimah* (premise or known) and *Matlub* (sought or unknown).

[102] al-Māturīdī used many logical methods of proof to present his position, one of which is using the analogy of the present for the absent (*Qiyas al-Gha'ib 'Ala-l-Shahid*)

[103] *Aṣl* can be translated as 'foundation', 'known' or 'root'.

[104] The foundational principles of an issue do not differ to the secondary branches that are linked to it.

[105] The basis of Imam Māturīdī's argument is that if we were to know the attribute of the present thing and the absent thing were to have the same quality, then the thing that is absent is similar to the thing that is present.

such, making any such [presumption] and limiting [the start] time [to a specific point] is invalid.

[The present] indicates the likeness of [the absent] as well as that which is different from it, even the more obviously different thing.[106]This is because of the fact that whoever sees something of the Universe, that something indicates that it is [either] pre-eternal or originated; and that both the pre-eternity and the origination are neither its likeness nor its equal. Then, [in the same way] it indicates that either it had a creator or that it came into existence by itself; and both of these two [possibilities] are different from it. This also indicates the wisdom of its creator or [His] imprudence, or either to its choice or predetermined nature. All of this is different to what he sees, and it does not mean that there is likeness to it. If that were to be the case it would be necessary to imagine that anyone who sees himself, sees the whole world to be like himself, which is quite far from being the case. As such, it is established that substances are not realised in their likeness to an absent thing. Only one aspect is realised as we have just mentioned. But if you know the quality of the present and you are informed that the quality belongs to an absent thing as well, you will know then that it is like [the thing that is present], but not that it is essentially like it. It is permissible, then, that [the present] is like [the absent] in this manner. For example, because he [possesses] knowledge of body and fire, he will have knowledge of all bodies and fires, even though he did not see them [all].[107] *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

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[106] It is clear that Imam Māturīdī had some access to the Greek books of logic, hence him using analogical principles and relating the ideas of the Greeks - and later mentioning Aristotle by name.

[107] Al Māturīdī is arguing that our knowledge of fire and substances is based on our knowledge of previous things, which is obtained by deduction. Therefore, he argues

In terms of what has been claimed about the *Aṣl* (root) and *Far'* (branch) – they have been inverted because of the [alleged] existence of the pre-eternal [Universe] and [its] pre-eternity. But [the fact that] nothing else existed would indicate [this to not be the case]. That is why you cannot make [the pre-eternal] a *Far'* branch but instead it is the *Aṣl* (root), as this [Universe] existed in this manner. Furthermore, anything whose existence relies on something [other than itself] is different based on reason from the substance [upon which it depends]. This can be observed [in the present Universe, in things] such as buildings [which differ from the builder], writings [which differ from the writer], and the various types of actions and statements that differ from [the person or thing that] brought them into existence. They cannot be similar in substance nor description to the thing due to which they exist, and this analogy is used for the Universe [and the Creator] - even though in reality, it is possible to prove [the existence of something] that cannot be sensed, and that which the senses cannot comprehend, such as hearing, seeing, the soul, the intellect, the ego and the many other things [that cannot be sensed].[108]

In terms of that which can be sensed, such as corporeal bodies, if they [originated] from a pre-eternal substance, it would be necessary that [this pre-eternal substance] produced a substance that is similar to it in all of its aspects, such as the intellect [of the pre-eternal substance being similar to the] intellect [that it produces], [and it is the same case for]

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that denying this deduction is actually the denial of knowledge. The *Mutazalites* also hold the position of using the present for the absent.

[108] Imam Māturīdī argues that people incorrectly believe that that which is visible always indicates something which is either the same or similar in the unseen. So they are taking that which is seen as the root and make the analogy to the unseen which they incorrectly deem the branch.

hearing and seeing.[109] But in reality this is not the case; the originating thing and that which is produced from it cannot be the same. As such, if they are different, this indicates one existing after not existing. If the difference [between the two] is accepted, this dispels the possibility of the thing that is described as pre-eternal having knowledge or other [determining attributes]. This proves the *Creatio ex Nihilo* of the Universe by someone who is not similar to [the Universe].

Further to this, writing indicates that there is a writer, but it does not describe his qualities or similitude, in terms of being an angel, human or *Jinn*. Therefore, writing does not signify the essence of the writer, nor his quality, nor is it his likeness. Writing can indicate any possible writer. Such is the case with the Universe and everything [that is contained within] it. [The Universe] and what is contained within it indicates a creator but it does not signify His quality or His Essence.[110] It is the same with building, transcription, ships and the rest of the professions. Therefore, analogy is necessary in order to prove the creator of the Universe, to analyse the Universe with all of the wonders that are contained within it and things whose coming into existence cannot be but by the Wise and Knowledgeable One. However, these things do not describe His quality or His Essence. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Shaykh Abū Manŝūr stated that the indication from the Universe is that it differs in a number of ways. [The fact that it is] changing and

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[109] This is because they are being produced by the substance and more than that they are 'coming' from that substance and as such it would produce something that has semblance to it.

[110] al-Māturīdī means that when we see a letter, it signifies that a writer exists, but it does not give an indication as to the nature of the writer, and it is in the same manner that the existence of the Universe means that a creator exists, but it does not provide any indication to God's nature.

evanescent, that opposing natures come together in one substance at the same time, indicates that it is not pre-eternal and that it existed after not existing. Its benightedness about its own origins, its inability to repair itself when parts of it are damaged, indicates that it did not come into existence by itself. Furthermore, [the fact that] opposing parts [within the Universe] amalgamate following the same harmonious system, indicates that the Maker of the Universe is [God]. Also this harmonious co-existence of the conflicting parts proves His *Qudra* (Power/Will), His Wisdom and His Knowledge. It is in this manner that the various differing aspects of the Universe indicate [that there is a Creator]. Therefore, the proof [for the existence] of the Creator is the inability of the creation. The indication of His Knowledge is the harmony of the Universe as well as its benightedness *vis-a-vis* itself. It is due to this that the indication [of *Shahid* (present) to *Gha'ib* (absent)] is based on differences and not on their equality.

[The fact that one is] necessarily in need proves the existence of another [who is not in need]. It is not possible that this other has a need for another, as this would result in infinite 'others', and that is impossible.[111] *And God knows best.*

[111] Shaykh Abū Manŝūr is using the well-known infinite regress argument.

The Refutation of Those Who Profess the Eternity of the Universe

[Shaykh] Abū Manṣūr stated that the arguments of the people who claim the Universe is pre-eternal are as follows: [All] bodies come from one another without there being a starting [point]. They are free from any maker that originated them, as this is what we have observed [up until this point], and what we see now is proof of what has occurred in the past; as such it is also necessary to apply this to those things that we have not observed. The reason for this is because if in humans and bodies what we observe results in the opposite of what we do not witness, then it will prove the existence of the *Maqūl* (non-body),[112] which is a conclusion based on an error in the imagination, a defect in the analysis, and the sign of an absent [mind]. The example of this is related to the nature of Time, because its appearance is dependent on a time that precedes it. To posit that Time was originated in time results in *ma la nihayah lahu* (*Ad Infinitum*) which is impossible. As such, if Time is pre-eternal then [the Universe is] also eternal.[113]

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[112] The argument of those who profess that the Universe is pre-eternal is that based on observation that we know that a body comes from another body, which comes from another, and so there is no start point. Furthermore, what is true for our current observation is true pre-eternally, and therefore the Universe must have come from another body rather than be originated from nothing. In addition, if we deny proof based on observation, then it is only based on our observations that we know of bodies and humans and if one could ignore observation and posit the opposite, then one could argue for the existence of non-bodies.

[113] In this section, al-Māturīdī begins by presenting a number of proofs of the philosophers, one of which is related to the nature of time. Time occurs as a series, as such there is no time in the present that did not have a time that preceded it, and *that* time cannot be without one that preceded it *Ad Infinitum*, which is impossible. Which means that if time is pre-eternal, then the Universe is also pre-eternal.

Furthermore, some of them believe that things exist through something else, without having a start [which was caused] by the Wise Creator. They stated this as a reason for the Universe existing, as it is impossible that there would be an effect without a cause.[114] This results in the following possibility,[115] which is that the entity that is causing the specific thing to exist does not have Power and Majesty, indicating being in need and unable. On the other hand, it has both of the attributes [of Power and Majesty], as such it becomes necessary that something created it, who is able to express His Majesty, and is necessary for everything [to exist], which demonstrates their misconception which we have mentioned [in the previous paragraphs].

In addition, some of them believe in the pre-eternity of the *Hayūla* [116] (Prime Matter), which they claim is the foundation of everything, and the beginning of all things is due to [this *Hayūla*].

[Shaykh] Abū Manŝūr said [that] as we have mentioned [when we refuted their argument] about a thing coming from another thing, some of them responded by [presenting their idea of] the pre-eternity of the *Hayūla*. [They posit that] the First Matter [*Hayūla*] transformed [and] everything

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[114] The text states that 'it is impossible for there to be a cause with no effect.' This is a clear error made by the transcriber. I have corrected the error in the translation to read 'it is impossible there would be an effect without a cause'.

[115] Philosophers also argue that something that is pre-eternal has the possibility of having come from the Creator. But in addition to this, because there cannot be an effect without a cause, and because the cause is pre-eternal, then the effect which is the Universe is also pre-eternal.

[116] *Aŝĥāb al- Hayūla* hold the belief that the entire Universe came from Prime Matter (*Hayūla*), which is matter without size or shape: it is neither an accident nor substance; it has no qualities and is infinite in quantity. All of the fundamental building blocks of the Universe, which includes all substances and their accidents, all types of change, cause and effect etc, are then caused by a dormant power (*Quwwa*) which comes from within this prime matter.

originated from it. Then these things affected each other, and then this First Matter became evanescent [as it no longer remained], such as what happens with the sperm [in relation to the human] and the egg [in relation to the chicken].[117] Some of them believe that the change in the Prime Matter occurred because of some incident that affected it [and] as such it transformed into a varying, conflicting and conforming nature; whilst some of them believe that this change occurred because of a Creator. Others claimed [that] the Foundational Matter known as *Hayūla* [acted independently].

Shaykh Abū Manŝūr said that their claim lies in the denial of that which they are unable to imagine or comprehend. This is because generally [speaking] whatever exists [in the present Universe] is not thus [i.e. created from nothing] and therefore they are unable to envision the possibility of the opposite of this occurring. As such, it should be said to [them]: 'Do you perceive in your mind the rejection of that which is not represented in the soul?'[118] If he answers 'Yes', he is arrogant because of our sharing with him the perception not to reject all things which we cannot perceive. If, however, he says 'No', we apply *Taqdir* (assumption), then he should be asked: 'When can one perceive in his mind the pre-

[117] The philosophers argue that everything that is in existence is so through the process of transformation; something transforms from its initial state in such a manner that the initial state is no longer in existence - such as when a sperm transforms into a man, the sperm no longer exists. Thus, anything that actually exists had a potential existence from which it originated. In this manner, the Universe had its potential existence in the *Hayūla,* from which its actual existence originated; the *Hayūla* then ceased to exist.

[118] al-Māturīdī is arguing that the premise of rejecting something on the basis that you did not observe it is flawed. This is because there are many things whose reality we accept despite the fact that we have not observed them or there are things whose existence we accept even if we cannot comprehend their form of existence. An example of this is the soul; we do not know what the soul represents, we do not know its makeup or where it exists (despite there being certain theories about it), but we still accept that it exists even if we have not 'observed' it.

eternity of something or its survival after it has disintegrated, or it becoming that which the eye does not see?' He might affirm all of this, despite the fact that it is not represented in the soul, while he denies hearing and seeing the course of a simple atom of food and the generation of the power of different atoms of hearing, seeing, cognition, hands, legs etc.[119]

We respond that if the entirety of time is coming from another thing then that can only happen in the following instances: One option is that the subsequent thing was camouflaged [and physically contained] within the preceding thing and then it appeared, which is impossible. Similarly, it is not possible that the entirety of humankind and trees were camouflaged [and physically contained in their entirety] within the *Hayūla*. [Another option] is that all aspects of humanity were camouflaged within the water which was [from the loins of] the first [father], and that one thing [namely the sperm] will be enough to include an inestimable number of humans, and this argument cannot be accepted based on reason as well as vigorous analysis. This proof refutes their claim that a thing comes from a preceding thing because all of [humanity] did not come from one sperm, nor can they claim that [the fact that an increase in the size of individual humans] occurs due to the [consumption of] food, because there is a time when the bones [of people] stop growing, even though they continue to [consume] the same foods. On the other hand it could be that there is an increase in only some substances, as it can be that some substances can increase in

[119] Māturīdī is making the argument that even though there are things in the present Universe which we cannot perceive by our senses, we know they exist based on reason. As such it refutes the argument that everything we observe in the Universe comes into existence from something else and therefore it is the same case for the Universe. This is because one is able to imagine the possibility that God created the Universe from nothing.

certain creatures [by eating certain foods], but other creatures will eat [the same type of food] all their lives, but the [same amount of increase] will not occur. Such as [we have a wide variety of] animals that eat from the leaves of the mulberry tree or from dates, but the waste [products] of these animals differ, which signifies that it is not just the foods that are causing the effect. Furthermore, foods are dead substances, so their effect can only be by the knowledgeable Creator, because none of [foods'] effect occurs without them being designed in this manner.[120] This [discussion] proves our argument.[121]

Another option is that only some of the subsequent thing is as a result of the preceding thing; which signifies that the entirety of the subsequent thing was not within the preceding thing. It stands established that the Universe is originated because a part of it was originated. Further, we ask them that if everything which is observable in the present world, and which you have assumed to be the proof of the Universe, is finite, then why is it not possible that the rest of the Universe is also finite? If it is possible that something can come into existence from something which is finite and its whole is not, why then is it not possible that something comes into existence from something which is not its whole? In the same

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[120] al-Māturīdī is arguing that an increase, whether it is due to length, weight etc, is not based on nature but instead God is the ultimate cause of everything. Two people may eat the same food, yet the result is different, as one grows taller or gains more weight. Therefore, the effect of the cause not being exactly the same in all instances means that God is the cause of all things. He further adds to this by stating that things which have no life cannot cause this variation in the result. Please see the next footnote for al-Māturīdī's underlying principle on this issue.

[121] Māturīdī holds in terms of the relationship between cause and effect, that based on observation, it *seems* like the effect the result of the *apparent* cause but in reality, it is God that causes the effect. Therefore, when someone brings fire and paper together, the effect is that the paper burns - but it is actually God that is causing the paper to burn. So it is seen that al-Māturīdī follows Occasionalism.

manner, we see parts [of the Universe] being space for other parts, but they cannot bear to be space for the whole due to the excessive weight.[122] In all of this lies the necessity of origination.[123] *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

In terms of the assumption that a thing comes into existence after the thing which precedes it, this necessitates origination. If there is no beginning, then there can be nothing [that exists].

Furthermore, if it is possible that the whole or the foundation of the Universe can be detached from the occurred incident, then it means that on the basis of reason anything is possible, [which means that it can be] simultaneously animate and inanimate. This signifies that its origination cannot be separate from the whole. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Shaykh [Abū Manṣūr] said that as for this issue being beyond the capacity of reason and being such that it cannot be comprehended, then this issue has been explained. This is a deficiency in the intellect of those people who do not apply reason, because they are attempting to

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[122] In the original Arabic text the supplication was placed here and the following sentence was after the supplication and in the next paragraph. It has been adjusted for better flow and so that there is no break in the point that is being articulated.

[123] al-Māturīdī is explaining that if his opponents believe that only a part of the Universe is finite, then this means that this part is originated, because something originated cannot be eternal. Furthermore, if a part of a thing is originated then the whole is originated, because something that is pre-eternal and something that is originated cannot simultaneously co-exist. In addition, we know that within the Universe a part of its space contains other originated things and hence that specific space cannot contain another thing from within the Universe, because the dimensions and limits of that space already contain the already existing thing. For example, within the Universe the space that contains the planet Earth; that specific space cannot contain anything else due to its dimensions, limits, and finitude, which demonstrates the finiteness of part of the Universe, and if the part is finite then the whole is finite.

understand something with their senses which in itself cannot be sensed. It is the same as one who is unable to distinguish sounds using [his] vision or to distinguish colours by hearing. [The same can be said for] any other thing which is recognised by using a specific sense, but [instead] one wants to identify it by using an unrelated sense and one is unable [to do so]. This example is [similar to that which] cannot be recognised by any of the senses, but he is attempting to identify it [with his senses]; however, based on reason he is unable to comprehend it. The same response is given to those who [posit that] things come from that which cannot be comprehended by reason. There is another answer to the two positions, which is that if by comprehension it is referring to an existence that requires approval, and that [approval] is necessary [for its existence], then we do not accept that which is not similar [to what we have observed].[124] However, if by that it is referring to the likeness of God, then God is not [similar to anything]. In fact, He is the One who created the things which are similar to one another.

Another proof for the origination of the Universe is the possibility of life existing in that which is dead. This is because it has life after it not existing, and it is living after having [the potentiality] of life within it. However, because it lives [due to the actualisation of the potentiality], then this signifies that the life of things [that are actualised] is originated,

[124] al-Māturīdī is explaining the issue of trying to comprehend something that you have not observed with the senses. If one is attempting to argue that the Universe has come from something that cannot be comprehended, then al-Māturīdī explains that if this thing needs the approval of another (meaning God) for its existence, then we do not accept that it is not like that which we have observed, such as the case with *Hayūla* (Prime Matter), where its description cannot be understood based on what we have observed, but it needs approval from God for its existence. But if it is God then it is accepted that God cannot be comprehended and is not similar to creation.

and their death is in the same vein.[125] This is because death comes after life[126] Shaykh [Abū Manṣūr] said that as for the statement of the people who say that God is the cause of the Universe, if by that they mean that He is like that due to the necessity of His nature, then that is absurd because of the fact that it will necessitate [that God] is compelled [to act],[127] because whoever possesses such an attribute [then] it is not possible for him to be the Creator of the Universe. On the other hand, the Universe is divergent, while the one who has natural necessities is of a certain fixed kind. But [if the Naturalists] mean by [that statement] that

[125] Here Imam Māturīdī is using the Aristotelian argument for the proof for the existence of God; that things have the potentiality of life and it is only when this potentiality is actualised that they come into existence. In the Aristotelian argument there needs to be something outside of the chain of potentials that are actualised, that itself does not need to be actualised, which is God

[126] He is arguing that the temporal nature of the Universe is proved by the possibility of life existing in non-living matter, because it has life after it not existing, and it is now living after once having only the *possibility* of life within it, proving that living things are temporal just as those things that are non-living - because things are moving from life to death, demonstrating their temporal nature.

[127] Māturīdī is rejecting the possibility that the Universe is created naturally without intention. The Naturalists believe that the Universe is made up of the Four Elements: Fire, Earth, Air and Water. Māturīdī argues that their idea is flawed for the following reasons; these elements are naturally caused and are compelled to act based on that which is naturally caused. According to the Naturalists, other than that which has been naturally caused by these elements, everything else can increase or decrease or be reduced to neutral, and therefore according to al-Māturīdī these elements cannot be the cause of the Universe but instead there must be a Creator who is not compelled to act based on the natural laws of the Universe. The naturally caused elements will only affect those things that they are naturally made to effect and therefore will not affect those things that it is not in their nature to. Furthermore, there cannot be things that have been affected but there is no cause, thus there must be someone who combines the effect of natural and non-natural causes, and the combiner of these two aspects is God. (In this footnote I have explained arguments that have been made by al-Māturīdī later in the book against the Naturalists, so that the reader understands the scope of the point that is being made).

[God] has created [the Universe], [then] that is correct but calling Him the cause [on that basis] is incorrect. The notion of [God being the cause] necessitates the coming into existence [of a thing] after not [existing]. This is based on the following reasons: The first is *Tanaqud* (mutual contradiction), which is that if there is non-existence, then there is the need for someone to bring it into existence, and that is the proof for [the existence] to be a necessary accident. The second is the coming into existence of the entirety of the Universe [by someone], and it is known that [something] *Creatio ex Nihilo* comes into existence after it did not [exist]. The third is that [if the Universe was created from pre-eternal matter], it would be necessary to assume that it was simultaneously in a state of amalgamation and separation, motion and rest, life and death - and in all of these there is a contradiction. Therefore, it is established [that the relationship between God and the Universe] is that of succession, [God] being the first and [the Universe] the second, in that order.[128] *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

[Shaykh] Abū Manṣūr stated that we believe that God is Pre-eternal, Knowing, Powerful, Acting and Benevolent in such ways that are sound to reason. Therefore God is pre-eternal in the way that by His act He brings a thing into existence at its appropriate time, in the manner that it is correct to describe Him as having no need for creation and as being the Creator in His self-sufficient existence, as well as to refrain from the notion that His ability to create was originated. This is known by observing the will and knowledge of those things that did not exist but then later came into existence. It is similar in terms of Power, Will and

[128] In terms of Shaykh Abū Manṣūr's statement that God is the first and Universe is the second, he is not referring to numerical succession, as he has explained previously that God is not numerically 'one' but instead it is refers to God being the Unique Creator and the second refers to the creation coming from the One.

Benevolence, as well as what has been mentioned previously. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Furthermore, it is common for one to make an assumption based on their comprehension, [such as when one observes] an elderly person, one may assume that he was always in [this state] but [in reality that was not the case]. Similarly for motion and rest, amalgamation and separation; if one were to state that it is not possible, then it is in the same vein that origination occurring pre-eternally is also not possible. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

In terms of the people who believe in two gods, namely Darkness and Light and yet still believe in the pre-eternity of the Universe, they in fact have a stronger basis to deny its [pre-eternity], as they posit that the Darkness and the Light were separate and later mingled, and therefore the Universe came into existence due to their mixing. However, it is accepted that the process of mixing is known to be originated, since before mixing they were separate, and at that time they were not called 'the Universe'.[129] *God is the grantor of success.*

However, they say that the Darkness and the Light were two separate substances that mixed [such that they moved] but before that they had occupied their own [respective] places. In the place of Light was all that was good and in the place of Darkness was all that was evil. The fact that they [later] mixed negates belief in the pre-eternity of Universe. Significantly, it not only refutes the doctrine of the pre-eternity of the

[129] Shaykh Abū Manṣūr is refuting the argument of the Dualists who also argued for the pre-eternity of the Universe. They held that there were two originators of the Universe, that Good and Evil are diametrically opposite and thus they cannot be from the same entity. Hence, one of these gods is the originator of all things that are Good in the Universe and the other god is responsible for everything that is Evil. They considered it to be impossible for a good and merciful God to be responsible for the evil and destruction in the world.

Universe but even more so it refutes the statement of al-Mani[130] where he argues that when the Light saw the Darkness penetrate it and mixing into it, the Light created this Universe in order to separate the parts of Light from the parts of Darkness. Therefore, according to this statement, this Universe came into existence after the mixing [of the Darkness and the Light], which happened through its origination, after the inability of the Light, at the apex of its strength when it possessed of all of its assets and all its goodness, but despite this it was unable to defend itself from the penetration of the Darkness. When [the Light] was penetrated and unable to escape [from the Darkness], its benightedness became evident. They then claimed [that the Light] created this Universe in order to separate its parts, after it had been confined by the Darkness, which is absurd. They believe [in] and give supremacy to [the Light], which they claim contains all that is good and initiates goodness and knowledge, despite the fact that [in reality it was] ignorant as we have explained. They believe in its good, its majestic strength, even though it was unable to protect itself [from the Darkness] at the apex of its own strength. Furthermore, if [goodness] is the creator of the Universe, then why is the majority of the Universe evil? So [it allegedly] created this evil in order to free itself from the confines of evil, as such, by doing so it supported evil and Darkness, as it then increased the parts of the Darkness which were in the parts of the Light when it created the Universe, so in those parts of the Universe [the Light was] destroyed and became even more confined. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

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[130] Mani was born in western Persia and lived approximately 210-276 AD. He was considered a prophet by Manicheanism, which was a religion in ancient Persia. Most of his writings have been lost despite the fact that he has been discussed in the books of many Muslim philosophers and theologians such Alberonius. Manicheanism teaches dualism, where the two natures of Light and Darkness have existed since the beginning.

[Shaykh] Abū Manŝūr said that the *Thanawees*[131] disagreed on the meaning of 'mixing'. Some said that it was the Darkness that mixed [with the Light] but even then they [also] disagreed [in the specifics of the issue]. Some of them attributed [the mixing to] a deliberate act whilst others denied this and believed that [the mixing of the Light and Darkness] occurred naturally, [that the Darkness] is dense and shielded whereas the Light is thin and attached [and that] it was due to this that the Light fell into the Darkness and they mixed. Some of them also say that the mixing occurred [solely] because of the Light. But all of these positions are absurd and how do they know [that to be the case]? Initially the Darkness and the Light were changing and transforming, with [everything having] an equal possibility of being a part of good or evil, and that which is beneficial or harmful. If the both of them are considered as a part of the Universe, then it comes into existence due to its own existence, and it will be annihilated due to its own annihilation. This signifies that neither of them can be God, because the both are not omnipotent and are ignorant. The [existence] of the Universe proves the Wise, Knowing and Majestic [Creator]. The [issue of the] Darkness and Light also proves this point.

Furthermore, if neither of them can produce the [evidence] which proves them [to be God then] both of them are originated and are not the Creator. In addition, the proof that both of them are not created by one [of them] is that there is nothing which by its substance is good and so no evil comes from it, nor is there anything which [by its substance] is bad so that no good comes from it, which signifies that it is not possible they were created by [either] one [of them]. In addition, when

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[131] In terms of the Dualists, not all of them held the same view and there were a number of different doctrines held by the various groups of Dualists. An example of this are the *Thanawees* who disagreed on what is meant by the two entities merging together.

it [Primal Light or Dark] is in the process of mixing, it is neither positive nor negative. In the instance when it is positive then it means that it is coming from Darkness, which means that good will be coming from Darkness [or Evil]. Thus, it will negate their belief in two gods, because their position is that Evil does not create Good, and nor does Good create Evil. On the other hand, it is Evil, so Good is sharing its [existence with it] and so then it also became Evil.

If this mixing is initiated by the Light, then both options are present [namely, whether the occurrence was a deliberate act or natural]. Furthermore, if they were separate from one another and then they [were later] mixed, then their mixing will occur in one of the following ways: That they are mixed in their [essential] substance but they remain different in their substance - which is paradoxical because if that is possible then it is [also] possible for [substances to be simultaneously] in motion but still at rest, alive but still dead, standing but still sitting.[132]

Another argument that counters the belief that something can be separate and then mix on its own is the fact that the accidents by which substances change can only exist via something else. Therefore, it is in this manner that amalgamation and separation [occur]. This proves that they were amalgamated due to some other thing, and it was also due to this other thing that they were initially separate, which signifies that they are originated. They believe that it is prohibited to sacrifice, but in fact [their own premise] dictates that they have a stronger reason to accept its permissibility. This is because the act of slaughtering separates the

[132] The argument being made is that two opposing accidents cannot occur in the same substance at the same time. Consequently, when something is mixed it no longer remains as its previous two separate entities. For example, when you mix the colours red and yellow you produce orange. When it is orange one cannot say that it is also red and yellow.

body - that is Darkness - and the soul - that is Light - as well as [that which is] between the Light and the Darkness [which is the] shielding. They are the ones who posited that the Light is thin and connected, which is [found] in the soul and not in the Darkness. According to this, it would be necessary for sacrifice to be permissible.[133] *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Their main principle is that they deny that Evil can come from the substance of Good, nor can Good come from the substance of Evil and that is why they believe in two gods. But they accepted the [issue related to the] admission of [guilt in relation to] the murderer. Because according to them, to admit [to the murder] of someone, when one did not commit the murder, is a lie and subsequently evil. On the other hand if the admission [of guilt] was by someone who is telling the truth regarding his sin [then this also considered evil according to them], which signifies that they do not understand the wisdom behind creating evil and therefore it necessitates their belief in two gods.[134] *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

In addition, they have the least right to speak about issues related to wisdom and seeking knowledge, since they believe that the substance of

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[133] He alleges that the beliefs of the Dualists about their two gods do not effectively follow through to their other doctrines. This is because the soul is considered to be from the Light and the body from the Darkness, and as such separating one from the other by killing something should be permissible according to their principles, as you are removing the evil of Darkness from the good of Light, but instead they say such an act is not permissible.

[134] The Dualists are said to hold that if a murderer admits to a murder and a person lies about committing a murder, then these are both equivalent evil acts, as they come from Darkness, even if one is murder and the other is merely a lie. Furthermore, they do not analyse the complexities entailed within the act, in that, the one who has admitted to murder has a mixture of good and evil in his act, because he murdered - which is evil - but the he told the truth, which is good.

Light would never produce evil. Furthermore, they argue that ignorance is evil but [if something comes] from the substance [of Light], then it must be wise and knowledgeable and can never be foolish and ignorant. Learning and seeking wisdom is the duty of those who do not possess it [which is considered good]. But [if a person] is from the substance of Evil [as he is ignorant before learning], then he will never be affected by [the good of learning and seeking knowledge]. Because [if he is from] the substance [of Evil], then he will not accept that which is Good.

If that is the case, then it is fruitless to engage in debate with them, and using arguments related to wisdom and knowledge is useless. This is because debating with them results in one of the following options: If [the debate] is with [someone from] the substance of Light, he is knowledgeable even before the debate, so there is no reason to debate. [On the other hand] if it is with [someone from] the substance of Darkness, then Darkness does not accept knowledge, and thus it becomes useless. This will necessitate knowledge as well as ignorance in both of them, and in [order] to continue the debate with them it would mean combining both of them into one, [but mixing them both into one] is the reason why they compelled themselves to believe in two gods. And we have [already] refuted [this argument]. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

The main principle regarding this [in terms of the] wisdom of discussing with them, is that it will be based on one of the following options; If you were to have a discussion with them about [their substance in terms of whether it is from Light or Dark] if they are aware of it so that [discussion would be deemed] useless [as there is no basis for knowing]; or [on the other hand] they don't know. Whichever one of these two will be disproven, the second will be disproven automatically. The other option is that the discussion will be a debate with the [person who

doesn't have the] substance of either [of them]. So even [in that case one of the substances] either affects [him] or it is useless, and whichever of the two are proven [to be correct], our case will be proven.

Further to this, we ask them that you believe it is impossible for one thing [i.e. Light or 'Good'] to generate both good and bad, so if they believe in this, how can they claim the Universe is created by both of them [i.e. Light and Dark, Good and Evil], when each thing in the Universe has both good and bad [contained] within it? Their claim refutes that the Light and the Darkness are two creators.[135] Have you seen anything with greater foolishness than what they have done to themselves, or anything with more obvious ignorance? *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

If one of them were to say; 'how can you claim that it is not possible for that which is wise to do something imprudent?' We respond that this can never happen from someone who is wise by himself, but it can happen from someone who is imprudent. You claim that the Light is imprudent in its interaction with Darkness etc. but God is more Majestic than any [of these claims]. It is possible that God will do something that is wise but human reasoning may not [be able to] reach [that understanding], otherwise God is more Majestic than [to not act by His Wisdom].

Furthermore, wisdom [is defined by] putting everything perfectly in its rightful place, giving everything what it [rightfully] deserves and not decreasing the right of anyone. It is only the people who do not know the limits of wisdom who deny what the monotheistic believers attribute

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[135] Al Māturīdī argues that the claim that good and evil do not come from one source, negates the possibility that Light and Darkness are involved in the creation of the world, since they then lack the ability to create on their own, which is observed by the fact that each substance contains both good and evil.

to God by giving [His] rights to those who do not deserve them, and we will speak about this issue [of wisdom] in its appropriate place, in a much more detailed way.

God's Names and Attributes: God may not be Described as 'Body' (*Jism*)

Shaykh Abū Manŝūr said that the reason why God cannot be called *Jism*[136] (body)[137] lies in the fact that its meaning in the present [world] implies that it has directions, or it indicates that it has limits or it is confined by three dimensions.[138] Therefore, it is not permissible that God be called by such a name. Because [directions, limits and dimensions] are the signs of the creation and are an indication of origination, all of which denote the meaning of having parts and limits, and that is a sign of being *Creatio ex Nihilo*.[139] We have previously explained that nothing is similar to God, but by using that name [of *Jism* for God] it will necessitate that He is similar to the rest of the things.

But if it is just [an issue of] naming something without applying the meaning [of the word to God] then it means that [a person is] using the word for something by which it is not known [to be used]. This cannot be explained by reason nor can it be [deduced based on] analysis, rather

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[136] The thing that exists by itself as a combination of many *Jowhar* (simple parts) is known as *Jism*. *Jowhar* is the smallest point and a *Jism* is three or more *Jowhars*. The Philosophers and An-Nazaam deny the existence of the simple substance *(Jowhar)*, which is a substance that cannot be split into two. They say a small substance can be split into two infinitely because for anything that is in space, its right side is different to its left side, which is why it can be split. Imam Māturīdī didn't use the same definitions and instead divided everything in the world into two categories; substances *(a'yan)* and accidents *(a'rad)*

[137] *Jism* can be translated as 'body' or 'matter'. For the purposes of this section I have translated it as 'body'.

[138] Shaykh Abū Manŝūr argues that *Jism* cannot be attributed to God as the term denotes directions and limits. It would mean God is finite, temporal and created.

[139] Imam Māturīdī is most likely directing this against the *Karamites*, who were anthropomorphists located in the same region as al-Māturīdī.

it can only be established by scripture from God - and *Jism* (body) is not of the names [that have been mentioned by religious scripture]. It was not transmitted by [God] and [neither was it] transmitted by anyone whom it is permissible to follow [such as the Prophets]. It is due to this fact that using [this name] for Him is not permissible. This is because if it were acceptable to use *any* name without a proof based on reason or scripture, then it would also be permissible to call Him *Jasad* (the corporeal body) or a *Shakhs* (the figure). That is not acceptable based on scripture, and it would result in [a person] naming Him using those names that belong to the creation and that is *fasid* (unacceptable).[140]

Furthermore, [in terms of the argument that] the word *Jism* does not have an essence, and it specifically refers to [the concept of] 'existence', in that case it would be acceptable if it did not have any other meaning. But in fact, no one uses the word *'Jism'* as a name for 'existence', which is because descriptions and accidents cannot be called *'Jism'*, even though both of them exist. It is due to this reason that it is not acceptable to use the name [*Jism* for God].

In addition, if someone were to criticise us because we call God 'the Agent' and 'Knowledgeable' etc, [then] the answer to this is two-fold. The first is that if one is unable to comprehend their meaning, it is acceptable to describe [God] by that which has been setup by scripture. But in this instance [of *Jism*], this condition [of it being revealed in scripture] is not found and therefore *'fa'il'* ('Agent') and 'Knowledgeable' are different [to *Jism* (body)]. The second [is that in the case of] 'the Agent' and 'the Knowledgeable', the meaning cannot be understood in

[140] The main argument by Shaykh Abū Manṣūr is that any word that implies or gives one the impression of corporeality cannot be applied to God - unless there is scriptural proof for that name. Even then, one uses the name but with the proviso that it denotes no similarity to God.

what we observe, and it does not necessarily mean that they are originated. Also, in the things that can be recognised, it does not necessarily mean that it is possible to describe God with [these names] and therefore using [those names] is permissible with the condition that one denies similarity to the creation. *God is the grantor of success.*

Furthermore, if some [people] were to argue that how are you not able to accept that everything [in the present Universe] that is called *Fa'il* (agents) are bodies? It is the same for *al-Qaadir* (The Omnipotent) and *al-Alim* (Knowledgeable), because based on what we have observed, everyone that is called by these names are bodies. We respond, that based on our observations, they are not called by these names because they are bodies, and the reason we do not accept it is because there are many existing bodies which are not given these names. Furthermore, we have mentioned the instances in which these names were attributed to Him, and we have mentioned the principles [of application that are used] based on reason and scripture. These conditions are not found in the names that they oppose.[141] If it would be acceptable to use any name, then others would attribute the body, the person etc. [to God]. In addition, based on our observation, the word *Jism* is not used for those things that cannot be split, such as the act, the accident, motion and rest. Therefore, it signifies that it is a name for something which has parts, such as being tall, wide and amalgamated.

If we reject the notion that God is [made up of] parts [as we know that parts are complex and can be amalgamated] which are the effect of an

[141] In the sense that based on our observations, created things are not called by these names merely because they are bodies but rather these names have other meanings in the created Universe.

act, then it will necessitate the pre-eternal existence of God.[142] [If God is complex] then we can attribute the following names [to God such as] tall, body, colour, taste, which explicitly result in the meaning of combination. But it is not permissible to use any of these words because of what their meaning entails, even if the explicit meanings of those words are not similar to the [word] *'Jism'. God is the grantor of success.*

[142] Imam Māturīdī seems to be following the doctrine of Aristotle on God being simple. This is because according to Aristotle, God being 'complex' would mean that He is made up of 'parts', which would mean that God is not pre-eternal.

God May be Described as a 'Thing' (*Shay'*)

[Shaykh Abū Manŝūr stated that] if someone asks, why do you say God is a *Shay'* (something),[143] but not as other things, but you do not say He is a *Jism* (body) but not as other *Jism* (bodies)? The reason why the same comparison cannot be applied is that the *Shay'* is not [something that is] found in *Jism* (bodies).[144] Furthermore, [*vis a vis*] the person disagreeing [with our position] regarding the word *Jism*, based on our [use of the] word *Shay'*, our response [to them] is that we have observed descriptions and accidents [in the present Universe] and they are not known as *Jism* (bodies), which makes the *Jism* (bodies) different to *Shay'*.[145]

If they want to dispute our statement [of God being] 'not as other things', our response to them is that this statement is not affirming any essence to [God], so there is no reason for the dispute. This disagreement is equivalent to the one who argues about whether it is [acceptable to say He is a] thing but not as other things; then why can you not say He is human but not like other humans? *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Shaykh [Abū Manŝūr] said that the response [to such a statement] is to state that God is not a (*Jism*) body and nor is He [in any way similar to]

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[143] Rejecting the attribution of *Shay'* to God was initiated by Jahm bin Safwan who stated that *Shay'* is 'somethingness' that is created and has likeness; as such, this cannot be attributed to God.

[144] He argues that one cannot negate God's somethingness, because that would be denying His Existence, but at the same time God is not a body as that would be limiting God within three dimensions or directions. As such, God's somethingness is His Existence, but He is not similar to anything else.

[145] al-Māturīdī is arguing that unlike in the case of *Jism,* the word *Shay'* is not used to denote a body. Also, one does not refer to an accident as a *Jism* (body) but you can refer to an accident as a 'thing'.

other bodies. This disagreement is not an argument about expressions but instead it is argument about judgement [about the use of terms relating to God]. Furthermore, we do not set up [principles in relation to] God so that people may argue [regarding issues such as] if He can do [one specific thing] then why can He not do another thing, but [an important point to consider is that] God's Divinity does not allow [people] to act with Him in this manner, But [instead] He shall be described by [that which is befitting of His Majesty]. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

In addition, an expression [related to] the essence is contentious, because when they pose the question that how are you able to state that He is a thing but not as other things, but [still maintain] that He is not a body [even] not as other bodies, [our response to them is that] when we say 'body', our statement of [God's] 'somethingness but not as other things' will mean that [God's] somethingness is not as that of the other things. This is because a body is one of the two types of things [i.e. substances or accidents], which signifies why it is not acceptable to say that He is a body but not as other bodies. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

[Shyakh] Abū Manŝūr said when we relay [God's] 'somethingness which is not as other things', it eliminates the [ascription of the] essence of the thing, and to this there are two aspects. The body - which is a *substance*, and the description - which is an *accident*, therefore our statement eliminates the essence of substances - which is [to have] a body and of descriptions - which are accidents. It is in the same way that when we eliminate similarity [to God], we affirm [the attribution from scripture] whilst also [simultaneously] rejecting *Ta'til* [which is denying the attributes], and therefore this disproves their statement. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

We have two arguments pertaining to [the issue of *Shay'*]. The first is that we consider the [word] *Shay'* as a name, and when [two different things] share the same name it is not necessary that it implies similarity, because the same name can be used in the instance of denying its meaning, such as by the expression 'this person is [the most] unique in his time' or '[he is] unique amongst his tribe'.[146] It is used to mean that amongst [his tribe] there is no one who is similar to him, despite the fact that they all share the same [tribal] name. If it was necessary that by sharing the same name it would denote similarity, then you would not be able to use names in the situations where you are attempting to deny this similarity. It is in the same way that we find that in the present world, [opposing] words such 'disbelief' and 'Islam' are both known as words, despite the fact that they are different in their meaning, and it is similar [in other cases such as in] motion [and rest] and actions [and inaction] etc.[147]

The proofs of [being able to] use the word *Shay'* [to express God's existence] are two-fold. One of these proofs is found in transmission, where it is stated [in the verse of the Holy Quran]: *'Laysa Kamithlihi Shay (There is nothing like him)'*[148] So if God was not *Shay'*, His resemblances to the [created] things would not have been denied by the term 'somethingness'. For in reality, this [use of] *Shay'* is the opposite to that which you can call 'a thing'. Also, God says *"What thing is greatest in testimony?" Say, "Allah is witness."*[149] So if it were not permissible to use the

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[146] Which means that he is different to everyone from his time.

[147] Māturīdī is saying that they are both words, but their meanings are completely different.

[148] Quran, Surah *As-Ashura* (42:11)

[149] Quran, Surah *Al-Anaam* (6:19)

term 'something' for God, it would be impossible that it is relayed in this statement such that it is applied to [God].

In terms proof based on reason, the [word] 'somethingness' in customary usage is used for nothing more than to express affirmation; for the saying *'Bila Shay'* (nothing) expresses a denial when it is not used as an expression to undermine. Therefore, it stands established that [the term 'something'] signifies affirmation and avoids the *Ta'til* (denial of the Attributes).[150]

If some people are not aware of the fact that *Shay'* only signifies affirmation and avoids *Ta'til*, [then] they are excused from applying it as they are afraid of conceiving something of God in their hearts which is detestable. Instead they apply the term *Hastiyyah* (external existence) which is clearer in expressing the affirmation, even though it is the same as how the term *Shay'* is understood among the linguists. Saying *La Shay'* (nothing) is used to mean denial or diminution. It stands established that using the word *Shay'* can only [be used to] affirm existence as well as for glorification, and God is the one who has [the greatest] right [to be affirmed and glorified]. But the words 'no body' do not denote either of the two [i.e. affirmation or glorification], and it is in this way that the word 'body' does not mean something whose existence is praiseworthy and Glorious, and [this is the reason as to] why they are different. In the same manner, saying 'not knowledgeable' and 'not powerful' are words which are used to deny glory and prominence. But [stating that something that is] knowledgeable and powerful means to attribute glory and prominence. *God is the grantor of success.*

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[150] *Ta'til* is the denial of the Attributes of God, which is the position that is held by the *Mutazalites.*

Further, in common speech, by the expression '[this] man is something' one does not understand the man's essence, nor does one understand his attributes when it is said 'man is knowing and able.' However, what is understood in the first instance is both his abstract and concrete existence, and in the second instance, him being described by these attributes. Therefore, the term *Shay'* is not meant to explain the essence of man, as the essence is explained by the expression 'man is a body', meaning that he possesses certain dimensions and directions and is predisposed to limits and accidents. The same goes for the rest of the humans and substances. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

In all of these issues we have to use the names which have been affirmed based on Scripture. *God is the grantor of success.*

[Shaykh] Abū Manṣūr said that the main principle in the statement of the *Tawḥīd* is that it starts by attributing similarity and ends by attributing uniqueness, and it becomes necessary to do so. In order to get to something we cannot comprehend, we use what we can sense. It is the same [case when one is attempting] to understand the rewards of the Hereafter and the punishment for the [sinful] pleasures of this world as well as the harms [that are contained within it]. [151] That is how the description of God with something which is recognised in creation is solely to give [one an] indication and [an opportunity for] reflection.

[151] The Imam is arguing that using what we can comprehend, one is able to get an indication of something that is not comprehensible, such as the rewards or punishments in the Hereafter. So, for example, if we are told that in Paradise there will be rivers of milk, it does not mean that rivers will flow with actual milk, because what if you don't want or like milk? Yet because we can only comprehend such rewards based on our experience in this Universe, we are given words to express them - therefore they indicate that the reward in Paradise will leave one completely satisfied in all ways. In the same way, God's Names do not have any similarity to created things, but instead they indicate, for example, that God is knowledgeable, so He knows all, even if that knowledge is not like human knowledge and it cannot be comprehended.

[This is the reason] why we [attribute names such as] 'Knowledgeable' and 'Powerful' etc. [to God], because by not using [those names] we will end up denying that [God has such abilities and attributes]. But by believing in the actual meaning which is understood [from these names] by the creation, we are affirming similarity, so we add the denial of similarity [to creation] whilst affirming the Attributes. It is necessary to apply this to reason as well as Scripture. But when there is no evidence based on Scripture or [such an attribution] is not necessary based on reason, then it is extremely problematic to ascribe such an attribute [to God].[152] *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

In addition, *Shay'* is not a name, because each name has its own specification, which is understood when it is mentioned; for example, if someone asks; *'what is a body?'*, we answer that it is that which has three dimensions. [When we are asked] *'what is a human?'* we mention the recognised description, such as it is a living or dead body, that has the possibility of dying. It is in this way that each substance has its own description which is stated by its specific name. It is in this manner that [using the attributes of] 'Knowledgeable' and 'Powerful' does not describe the Essence [of God] and nor does it limit [God and His attributes]. But what it does mean is that it is not possible that [a person] is unclear about [God] and that he is unable to comprehend these things; but it does not describe [God's] Essence and it is because of this that it is permissible to [ascribe] Attributes to the Essence but this is not [the same as] attributing similitude to the Essence [of God]. It is possible that one may misunderstand the fact that Knowledge and Ability are different to Him, as we have witnessed [and] this is why we add [the statement 'not like others'], which is [something that should always be]

[152] Imam Māturīdī is rejecting the possibility of *Shay'* meaning that one is making resemblances to God.

mentioned so that everyone understands that He is Knowledgeable and Powerful by Himself and not because of others. *God is the grantor of success.*

Shaykh Abū Manŝūr was Asked About the Meaning of 'The One'

[Shaykh] Abū Manŝūr was asked for the meaning of [the expression] *'al-Wahid'* ('the One') and answered that it is used to describe four things.

[The first is] a *Kull* (totality) which cannot be doubled. [The second is] the *Juz'* (part) that cannot be halved. [The] third is something which is between these two that allows for both operations, larger than that which cannot be halved and smaller than that which cannot be doubled, since there is nothing beyond the totality. The fourth is that through which the [first] three exist; Him, not Him; and He has concealed who He is. He is the One before whom the tongue falls silent, and the One that you cannot comprehend, the One before whom the imagination fails, and reason is at a loss. That is God, the Sustainer of the Universe.[153]

In terms of a person who is willing to attribute a body to God with its [literal] meaning, after they [have read and understood] the explanation that bodies are substances upon which accidents occur and that they are finite etc, then with that person the discussion will turn to the attributes of bodies based on our observation, in terms of the possibility of attributing their description as a whole. It is not acceptable to attribute that to God, because of their description which includes signs of their origination. [In terms of ascribing something to God], if it is not possible [then] it must be named [as something that is not possible for God], but if it is possible then it must be attributed [to God].[154] *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

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[153] al-Māturīdī is using Neo-platonic philosophy, that God being 'One' is not in terms of numbers, but rather in terms of God's uniqueness.

[154] Imam Māturīdī is explaining that in terms of the anthropomorphists who still insist on attributing a body to God, then the discussion will turn to when it is possible or not

God's Essential Attributes: Free Will (*'Ikhtiyār*)

Describing God as the Powerful, the Knowledgeable, the Alive, the Bountiful and the Generous - using [these attributes] to name Him is known by reason as well as scripture.[155]

As for scripture, God is named in the Quran as well as the other [revealed] books in the way in which the Names have been reported [as well as mentioned] by the Prophets and the rest of the people. But some people have converted these names to mean something other than Him, thinking that in the affirmation of God's name there would be likening of every name to anyone else who has these names. If that were the case, that would be also with regard to the concept of *Ta'til*, because by denying the Attributes of God there is a sort of likening Him to the things that do not have these Attributes. Irrespective of this point, we have already explained the impossibility of likening [merely] by the equivalence of names. Therefore, God is to be named in the way He has named Himself and He is to be [known] by the attributes that He has attributed to Himself.

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to ascribe names and attributes to God. Thus, as he explained previously, his principle is that you only attribute those names that God ascribed to Himself, whilst denying any similarity to the creation.

[155] There are eight eternal Attributes of God for Sunnis, which are eternal with His Essence. One has to believe in these attributes to have belief in God and according to the Māturīdīs one can come to belief in these attributes based on reason. These are the same as the seven attributes that are the qualities of God according to the Asharis, with the additional attribute of *Mukawwin* (Creator), though one may add more attributes to these based on the Māturīdī School and so they are not limited to these eight. The eight attributes are: *Qadir* (Powerful), *'Alim* (Knowledgeable), *Hayy'* (Alive), *Mutakallim* (Speaking), *Murid* (Willing), *Sami'* (Hearing), *Basir* (Seeing) and *Mukawwin* (Creator).

As for reason, it establishes [that God possesses qualities] that make Him different to the creation in His Essence and Attributes. It is therefore established that God's action is not that [of His innate necessary] nature, but it is the action of His own choice.[156] In addition to this, the harmony of the sequential act, in which there is no appearance of any defect, nor any void of wisdom, proves that the acted upon comes [about] as the result of the will of an agent, which proves that creation was His real act.[157] *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

When God initiates something, He either creates or destroys it in its entirety, which includes the things He recreates, such as the night and the day. It stands established that His act is by His choice, because He repairs what He destroys and recreates something which He previously completed. He brings the absent into existence, and the existing [thing] into absence. This signifies that [all acts are by His] Will. This is because the one who acts by being compelled or [acts unwillingly] by his nature, cannot eradicate that which is existing nor the other way around. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Furthermore, we spoke about the Universe being *Creatio ex Nihilo,* and this [act] can only be done by one who has the optimum level of free will, and not by one who acts naturally or is compelled [into acting]. It is

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[156] What al-Māturīdī means here is that when we see that a cause has resulted in an effect, this can happen in a number of ways. One of these ways is that it can happen naturally without there being the intention of someone to bring said effect into existence. For example, those who do not believe in a Creator and argue that the Universe came into existence naturally without there being the intention of a Creator to bring it into existence. For example, saying that the 'Big Bang' happened naturally and this resulted in the expansion of the Universe, but no one caused this 'Big Bang' and instead it happened naturally.

[157] As we have explained, the issue of God causing the Universe naturally without intention is the opinion of some Greek philosophers. Shaykh Abū Manṣūr's comment is not completely matching, so most likely there is a missing paragraph.

not possible that one who can initially originate [the Universe from nothing] is compelled [to act] or that [the act] occurs naturally and that He does not have free will, which would signify that He, Himself, is not omnipotent and that He is originated. God is far from [being ascribed] all of these defects.[158]

In terms of proof based on the customs of people, [we see that they] pray to God, pray to Him for ease, [and] they [hold the] belief that God is in control, [that He] helped [in the] support of some and disowned others. Considering the [fact that the] holder of power can initiate anything by that power, but the one who is compelled to act cannot do any of these things, and there will be no one who will have the desire to [do these things], [then this] proves that God created the Universe by His own Will.[159]

[158] Naturalists held a wide range of views in Classical Times. Some of them believed that the world is a result of the Four Elements (Fire, Air, Water and Earth). Others believed the Universe or God was as a result of the Heat, Cold, Wetness and Dryness. The Astrologers believed that there are seven Planets which control the Universe.

[159] According to al-Māturīdī, something that is an example of God's free will and the fact that He is not compelled is based on that we pray when we want something in the hope that God fulfils our wish; if God was not freely able to act then all forms of praying to God would become redundant since God would not freely be able to fulfil these requests.

Power (*Qudra*) and Will (*Irada*)

If the Will [160] [of God] has been established, then His *Qudra* (Ability/Power)[161] to create as well as free choice that the creation be the way that it is have also been established. Things coming into existence through [the action of] one who has no power, do so by way of compulsion [being applied to that being]. He will be unable to [perform an act] and nor will he be able to [perform] the opposite of it. Therefore, it stands established that whatever comes into existence which is assumed to have come through Power, comes by His free choice. These are also the signs of the reality of actions in the present Universe, a fact which leads us to the knowledge of that which is absent.[162] *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

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[160] It is by the Will of God that the Universe has been created, in opposition to the doctrine of the Naturalists. There is a difference between *Maseeha* and *Irada*. *Masheeha* is considered *Tahkweeni Irada*, so for example God's Will is carried out infinitely; He wants to create the World and as such it comes into existence. Then there is *Tashreehi Irada*, which is an order issued to test people, such as God ordering people to pray. Thus, if we refuse to adhere to *Tashreehi Irada* by not praying for example, this doesn't mean that God doesn't have the ability to carry out His order.

[161] *Qudra* (power) is attached to possible things and not necessary or impossible things.

[162] Shaykh Abū Manŝūr argues that if it is accepted that God has Free Will, then He has other related Attributes, such as His having *Qudra* (Power) over everything, the *Irada* (Will) to create the Universe. He must have *ilm* (Knowledge) of His creation because everything in the Universe is part of a harmonious sequence.

Knowledge *('Ilm)*

As we mentioned previously, the harmonious sequence of the act such as what is performed by the act as well as its perfect continuity, all signify that His act is based on perfect knowledge.[163] *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Furthermore, [the fact that God has] created substances which are not tested [held accountable by God] to be in the service of those that will be tested [such as humans], and [created] those that are supposed to be perpetual in the service of ones that remain in perpetuity, signifies that they were created by the One who knows everything, who knows what they need and what supports their continuity and livelihood. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

In addition, God's *Creatio ex Nihilo* is a sign, along with the proof [that the Universe] has a Creator and the Oneness of this Creator. If He were not to have knowledge of what He created, He would not have been able to create them as they [have been created].[164] *God is the grantor of success.*

Likewise, following the Prophets who brought the command [of God] avoids disputes, divisions and corruption. If God did not know, then

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[163] Based on our observation we can see that the Universe is harmoniously organised, which is based on a deliberate act of the Creator.

[164] In '*Ta'wilat Ahl as-Sunna*' - his commentary on the Quran, *Surah Nahl* (16:66-69), he argues that this verse is the strongest indication of God's power to create, as well as His knowledge and control over creation. The fact that substances in the Universe produce something different from their essence proves that they were created by one who has the knowledge and power to create things out of nothing. He uses a similar proof in his commentary on Surah *Ya-Sin* (36:37), which relays that the Solar System has a systematic order indicating the Knowledge and Power of the controller of the Universe.

this would not have happened due to the Knowledge of God, which includes knowledge of the differences [in the creation].

Moreover, the statement of the ones who say, 'God was there when there was no creation, then creation came into existence without the act of creating by anyone beside the creation itself' - this statement is the same as the ones who mention [that the creation came into existence through something] without mentioning the [extra] condition of "other than the Universe [itself]".

In fact, one who attributes creation to Nature has a greater right to believe in [knowledge and free choice] than the ones who attribute it to God, without anything coming from Him except creation. Therefore, by them attributing [the creation to Nature] they are in fact affirming [that whatever is the cause of creation has knowledge and free choice] even if they [do not agree] with the attribution of the second group [who ascribe it to God]. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

In the same manner, we do not in the present world find that one who is able and not prevented from acting, is nonetheless unable to act. We also do not find anyone who is able to speak not speaking. What we experience in the present is an indication of the absent. So [these qualities] are bound to God too. *God is the grantor of success.*

Furthermore, creation is described as being corrupt, evil, harmful and negative, and if these occurred naturally from God, then they would also be attributed to God. He would [then] be called the corrupter, the harmful and the evil [one]. The fact that this form of attribution is considered [an act of] disbelief signifies that the way [creation] is attributed [to a natural act of God] is [not acceptable] based on what has

been mentioned.[165] It would be on the same basis that giving birth, obeying, disobeying and performing all types of acts would be literally ascribed to God, so He would be attributed those [names].[166] *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

In addition, if it is not possible [for God to act willingly, meaning] that initially it was not possible [for God] to act [willingly], but then later this became possible, then there are two possible options [for such a position]. The first is that it was innately impossible to act [willingly] and if that it is the case then He would remain in such a state indefinitely. The second option is that it was impossible [for God] to act [willingly] for some other reason, and that is the focus of the discussion. So the impossibility [to act willingly] was not due to Himself, and therefore this

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[165] al-Māturīdī argues against those who state that we cannot attribute anything to God which is attributed to humans by claiming that it is impossible that God is similar to created things merely by sharing the same name, as for example when we say '*Ḥayy*' (living). According to the *Mutazalites* though, you cannot attribute any of those things to God, such as using the real meaning of '*Ḥayy*' because it is only applicable to the creation and thus is an error. For example, black and white are similar in that they are colours, they are accidents, and in that they are created. Hence they argue that God knows, but there is no such thing as His 'Attribute of Knowledge'.
The *Mutazalites* have a second objection. They argue that when you attribute 'power' or 'knowledge' to God, the question arises of whether that Attribute is separate to God, within God, or is it God? If you say it is separate, is it created or pre-eternal? If it is pre-eternal, then that means due to the many Attributes, there is more than one pre-eternal thing. If it is created then it cannot be God, because if that is the case then there would be more than one God, as someone has to make the Attribute. Additionally, the Attribute cannot be within God, because when this Attribute is applied it means that some change is occurring in God. For example, God being angry means that a change happened to God and so then He cannot be God.

[166] The *Mutazalites* including Ka'bī held the view that God doesn't have Attributes in reality (*fi-l-haqiqa*). What this means is that for example *Ilm* (Knowledge) is not an attribute of God but instead it is His act, so it is not permissible to describe God using these attributes. Instead His 'real attribute' is solely God saying that He is 'the Knowledgeable'.

would mean that it was possible for Him to [act willingly] by Himself all of the time. *God is the grantor of success.*

[In terms of] the people who believe that creating is a litèral act in the same [manner in which] praying is also a literal act, Abū Manŝūr said [this position is based on] a misconception. [This is] because that is God's name in the present Universe, but creating is His act, and we have [already] explained the conditions of naming [something] which proves the impossibility of [literally applying it to God].

God's Attribute of Action: Creating (*Taqwīn)*

If someone asks: If the Attribute of God *Taqwīn*[167] is pre-eternal, then why is *Mukawwan* (the created thing) not also described [as pre-eternal]? We respond to him that this is because God brings things into existence as they are supposed to be. Similar to this is His *Qudra* (power over things) and His Will for them, as well as His Knowledge about them - in such a way that everything occurs at its proper time. *Creatio ex Nihilo* is viewed in the sense of what it will be[168] and not of the knowledge about it, despite the fact that neither the knowledge of existing things nor the power over them are changed. The core principle of this issue is that if God is described by an Attribute [such as His Power and Knowledge] it necessitates that these are attributed to Him pre-eternally. On the other hand, if the thing is mentioned together with Him using a description that is similar to His, such as, 'the thing known' [by His Knowledge], 'the thing decreed' [by His Power], 'the thing willed' [by His Will] or 'the thing originated' [by His Origination], one would need to indicate when these things were created, so that there is no confusion by applying pre-eternity to them.[169]

The proof of the first argument is what has been mentioned previously. The proof of the second argument is that if the time of the creation of

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[167] *Taqween* is the pre-eternal Attribute of God. Shaykh Abū Mansūr al-Māturīdī makes a differentiation between *Taqween,* which is the pre-eternal Attribute of God and *Muqawin,* which is an existing thing which is the result of the *Taqween.* What Māturīdīs call '*Muqawin*', the Asharis call '*Taqween*'.

[168] *Creatio ex Nihilo* effects the creation that comes into existence

[169] al-Māturīdī differentiated between Essential Attributes (such as God's Power) which are eternally applied to God, and God's Active Attributes (such as God creating) which have an application on the created thing - with the understanding that the Attributes bear no similarity to God.

the thing that is acted upon is not mentioned, the thing acted upon might indicate its pre-eternity or its benightedness [about its timing] as well as to the inability [of its originator]. Therefore, when it is stated that an object was originated at a specific time, it indicates that it was originated at that specific time. This has the same application *vis-a-vis* [God's] Knowledge, Power and Will. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Proof of the Existence of the Attributes: Against Equating the Creation with the Created

In terms of alternative viewpoints concerning the creation and destruction of the Hereafter; in regards to God creating the Hereafter, the options are two-fold. He either makes it so that this time is the time of the Hereafter [i.e. it already exists], or the time is made by the *Taqwīn* of God coming into existence to create the Hereafter. The first meaning is not possible and is incorrect, and the second is invalid because it specifies a time for the Attribute of *Taqwīn*, which indicates [its] origination.

If one were to posit that the *Taqwīn* (creation) [of God] without a *Muqawin*[170] (created object) is an affirmation of inability, the argument would only be correct if the creation were meant to occur at a certain time, but it [then] did not occur at that time. It is the same case for the *Irada* (Will) and Knowledge [if their effect did not come into existence] it would then mean benightedness and compulsion. But if the objects come into existence at a specific point in time, then this is not the case, as we have already explained with regards to Knowledge. The same applies to Hearing, Seeing, Benevolence and Goodness. All of these Attributes of God are eternal even though the thing which is being heard and that which is being seen as well as the rest of the similar things are *Creatio ex Nihilo*. This is the general principle of the operation of *Creatio ex Nihilo*. Therefore, the time of the heard thing must be mentioned, whilst mentioning these two things, and the same is applicable to the

[170] The result of the *Taqween*.

former [meaning God and the object of His creation].[171] *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

The basis of this argument lies in the fact that one who is not capable of performing an act at the time that he intends to perform it, signifies inability, whereas if it were to be performed [at the described time], then that is the sign of power. In the same way, the one who can perform an act as well as its opposite [displays greater traits] of perfection. Furthermore, the one who can perform an act in one way is [not as strong] as the one who can perform an act in all of the [possible] ways. This is the attribute of God, because it is an attribute of perfection.[172]

In terms of the act of a person, it occurs at the time [of performing the act], whilst he is engaged with [the act], which is performed by [the use] of a mechanism. On the other hand, God's act is by Himself, because He knows by Himself and is able by Himself, whereas everyone else performs [acts] through [the use of] something else. Without this [mechanism], they would not be able to perform the act, whereas God initiates from nothing. This is why their attribution is incorrect.

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[171] Al-Māturīdī is attempting to explain the concept of God's eternal Attribute of *Taqwīn* - which is the attribute of 'Creating'. *Taqwīn* according to Imam Māturīdī is not the actual act of 'creating' but rather it is the Knowledge about it and the Power over the creation. Therefore, God brings something into existence at a specific time without being controlled by the rules of cause and effect.

[172] This is explaining how the relationship between cause and effect, something that is normally linked to time, is not something that can be applied to God and His creation of the Universe, an issue that is overcome by the notion of *Taqwīn* and something coming into existence. Furthermore, al-Māturīdī is arguing that God has the ability to create whenever and in whichever way He wants, and the one who is able to act on His volition is the One Creator.

Furthermore, another proof is that there are acts of the creation that occur by *Tawalud*[173] (after some time), such as throwing a stone, or committing a crime, where the [individual] will gain the attribute of a criminal or a killer only after the end of his real act. This analogy is correct even if the act [of creation] is not hidden as a natural consequence or due to *Tawalud.* This is because even if one of the two sides of the issue has been witnessed [namely, a person performing the act (throwing the stone) and the result of the act (the stone hitting a person)], it would negate the possibility of attributing the act to the person, which indicates [an aspect of the act] that was not seen. Bearing in mind that it is not in the same manner as we have mentioned, in terms of the permissibility of attributing *Shay'* without it being a body, to God. This is because it does not mean that it is an accident, despite the fact that based on our observation of the present Universe, anything that is *Shay'* and is not a body is definitely an accident. This is not [the case with] His name. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

[173] *Tawalud* is when the result of the act occurs after the initial action. For example, you throw a stone and after some time it hits something; only when the object has been hit can you be attributed with the action of hitting the object.

Creating is Just as Eternal as Knowledge and Power

Furthermore, their proposition is a claim of [applying] inability [to God]. This is because a person is unable to perform an act without [using] the thing that causes it to occur. Moreover, he is unable to perform [the act] without using himself [to execute the act either] by [either] being in motion or being at rest. Further, no one denies that he has been ordered and forbidden [to do things by God] at a [specific] time, without the time of applying the command being given, and this is [an example of God] promising and warning - whereas the Prophet has to immediately obey the commands and prohibitions that have been revealed to him. As such, there is no reason to reject that [the command or prohibition] can be immediately brought into existence by the pre-eternal [Attribute of God,] *Taqwīn*. It is in this manner that God is described as having Knowledge of everything that exists, even though He knew it pre-eternally. Therefore, origination is applicable only to [created things, but not to God]. *God is the grantor of success.*

Since the intellect of people falls short in their comprehension of the meaning of the concept of *Taqwīn*, the easiest way to express it would be implied in the simple statement of '*Kun*' ('Be')[174] Everything is according to [God's] knowledge of that which is going to be. Therefore, everything is being created, as it is created, at a certain time without repetition. This category also includes the question of *Amr* (Command), *Nahy* (prohibition), *Wa'd* (promise) and *Wa'id* (warning). This [statement of

[174] Māturīdī is explaining that the act of God does not occur by the word '*Kun*' ('Be'). The source of this argument is the interpretation of the Quranic verse *"When He decrees a matter, He only says to it, 'Be', and it is"* (Quran 2:117). But rather, the word *Kun* was given as an example by God to demonstrate that it is really easy for God to create. Therefore, when God states '*Kun*', it means that He creates with ease.

Kun] would then mean information about an existent and what that existent is going to be, including the different states of that existent, their times and places. But people are unable to comprehend *Taqwīn* without associating it with effort and hardship. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

A comprehensive explanation of the issue [of *Taqwīn*] would divert us from the focus of the work. But the hope is that the clarification provided will be sufficient to give one an accurate understanding of the topic.

Presentation and Refutation of al-Kaʿbī's Doctrine on The Attributes

We will now mention the position of al-Kaʿbī[175], so that you will be able to understand the level of his knowledge and his [ability] to recognise God, with the purpose of providing a comprehensive understanding of the School of the *Itiẓaal*. Since he is, according to the [*Mutazalites*], their best scholar in the whole world. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

[Kaʿbī] said that any attribute that can be different in the sense of state or person is to be regarded as an attribute of action, such as God giving *Rizk* (providing for someone) or God showing mercy in one state and not showing [mercy] in another [state]. The same is applied to speech which differs [from person] to person. This, however, is not the same for the Attribute of Power, Knowledge and Life. Therefore, these are the Attributes of *Dhat* (the Essence of God). Further, [Kaʿbī] said that anything which is connected to the Attribute of *Qudra*, is an Attribute of action, such as showing mercy or speaking. [Equally], anything which is not connected to the *Qudra* is an Attribute of the Essence [and] as such it is not acceptable to ask questions about whether or not [God] can have knowledge of something, [as it is an essential Attribute of God]. [In this instance] we seek clarification about the *Dhat* (Essence). [The question arises that] why is it not possible to attribute the opposite? [Kaʿbī] said because it is referring to the Essence, and the Essence is not changeable. Then he continued that if God's Essence is not changeable

[175] Kaʿbī is mentioned extensively through this book, the reason is that al-Kaʿbī was a contemporary of al-Māturīdī and there is reason to believe that they wrote a number of books refuting one another, even though we don't have the books of al-Kaʿbī in current times.

then as long as He exists it is not possible to attribute change to Him. He proffered that if something exists due to some reason, then it will continue to exist as long as that [reason] is still present.[176]

Shaykh [Abū Manṣūr] stated that [Kaʿbī] also said that in reality God does not have Attributes, but this is [just] the manner in which people name Him. Both conditions are met in the descriptions of people, because they have described Him using 'Knowledge', 'Power' and 'Agent', making a distinction in terms of their description. But then he [i.e. Kaʿbī] by himself described God as being realistically knowledgeable, realistically a creator and realistically powerful. Thus, there is no reason to attribute it to the description, because it is agreed upon in reality, in terms of the meaning of both of the conditions.[177]

It is possible that it can be said that God heard the prayer of such-and-such [a person] but did not hear the prayer of such-and-such [a person]. Also, some may say that God does not know that I am performing a particular act, or they may say that God knows that I am performing an act at a certain time but does not know that I am performing the act at

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[176] The *Mutazalites* reject the Attributes of God for a number of reasons, but one of the arguments made by the *Mutazalites* is that if you posit that God has Attributes, you are arguing that God has parts - in that each of His Attributes are different 'parts' of God, so His Essence is one part, His Knowledge is another part, and it is the same case for each 'one' of His Attributes. Another reason for rejecting the Attributes is that by applying them, one is indicating the similarity of God to His creation, in the context that God's knowledge and human knowledge are similar. The *Mutazalites* believed that this anthropomorphised God.

[177] Shaykh Abū Manṣūr is relaying the position of the *Mutazalites* who denied the existence of the Attributes of God. They maintained that God is One, pre-eternal and is not more than one. As such there is only His Essence, which is self-contained, and He does not have any attributes, because each attribute would mean that God is in parts. This would then pose the question that do all of these parts make up God, or is each individual part God?

another time. It is not necessary that the [attributes of] Hearing and Knowledge are Essential Attributes in the same vein as the attributes of Speech and Mercy [are Essential Attributes]. [If in response] this person is attempting to deny the thing which is heard or known, then [in reality what he is doing] by not ascribing the attribute [such as being heard or knowledge] is that he is in fact denying that that [act] occurred [in reality]. Therefore [if he, meaning Kaʿbī, denies these attributes vis-à-vis the occurrence of the act], then in the same manner Kaʿbī would deny Pharaoh being judged [for his actions] by denying [God's] speech to [Pharaoh], which would mean the willing of the judgement [towards Pharaoh by God's eternal speech]. This is known by the promise [of God] to the believers that He will speak to them and [in equal measure] removing this hope from the disbelievers, which is our stance on the issue. Therefore, Kaʿbī's argument is not valid because his condition is based on the permissibility of describing and we have [already] explained this [issue]. From the above-mentioned arguments, we know it is not permissible to describe God as being *'Creatio ex Nihilo',* and if it would be permissible, then it would be permissible to describe Him as the one who repairs and the one [who] breaks. The positive and negative [attributions of] all of these [names] are not permissible, which proves that what Kaʿbī said is incorrect.[178]

Furthermore, anything which is not a voice, you cannot say that [one can] hear it, but instead you can state that [from it one] knows. But this distinction is not necessarily the same [case] for the Attributes [of God]

[178] Shaykh Abū Manṣūr argues that the position of the *Mutazalites* is ineffective because they describe God by His Attributes, but they then remove the application of the meanings of these Attributes. Thus, they maintain that God has Knowledge but He is not Knowledgeable. Furthermore, if you are able to ascribe an attribute but not its meaning, then you can apply any attribute to God, as the meaning of said attribute will not be applicable.

nor does [the ascription of these Attributes] necessitate a change in the Essence [of God]. [In fact], when one does not ascribe these Attributes [to God the result] is the same as those who deny the Attributes of [God]. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

In addition, it is unacceptable to not attribute Justice to God. Even though God did not say that it is an Attribute of Essence. It stands established that their definition is not valid and incorrect.

Then we asked him [Kaʿbī] that what do you mean by 'the Attribute of the act'? Is it the act itself - which is creating? According to you, is it an act or not? If he states that it is creating, then we say to him that why do you maintain that creating is an Attribute and whose attribute is that? Because no attribute exists except for the one to whom it is attributed. If he says it is an attribute of God, then to apply the attribute of creating is a dangerous claim because in the [act of] creating there is disorder, incapability, filth and harm. Everyone is described by their own attributes. No intelligent person would agree to being described by these attributes, so what do you think about God? If he says it is not creating, then he has to accept that he is attributing an action. And we have [already] explained that God is described by [the word] 'creator', which proves that His Attribute of action is an Attribute of His Essence.

We also say that God is the Creator, *Ar-Rahman* (The Beneficent) and Ar-Raheem (The Merciful) and these [Attributes] are ascribed to His *Dhāt* (Essence). Similarly, His Essence will be described by the Attributes of His acts, as we say that wise words or words of truth or falsehood are the attributes of their owner - and it is in this manner they are attributed to God. Further, we ask Kaʿbī that are you implying that Mercy and Forgiveness are attributes of *Fi'l* (Action), and according to

you cursing as well as insulting are also acts of *Fil.*[179] [The question then arises that] what are the acts that are called 'mercy' and 'forgiveness' so that God can be described with them? If he says that they are Paradise and Hell, acceptance and rejection etc., this refutes his belief about the issue related to the *Aslaah* (most optimum)[180], justice and oppression. This is because God is Merciful, and [according to this position] God does not do any of these [things] to His creation, but in reality [God] does do all of [these things to His creation] - unless he provides a different response and [claims that] these two Attributes are related to something that was not created.[181]Bearing in mind that if he states that God insults, it is not acceptable to attribute this to God.

Then we ask him: Did you consider what you mentioned in order to distinguish between the Essence and Act, when you know the Essential Attributes are different when using them and describing [them, meaning attributing them to God] such as Knowledge being attributed about the issue where there is no connection with *Qudra* (Power), God's *Qudra* being connected to the things where there is no hearing present, [His] Vision being connected to the things where generosity is not applicable, [His] Wisdom being applicable to the issues where hearing[182] is not

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[179] Al Māturīdī argues that both the Essential Attributes and the Attributes of Action are eternal. So for example *Takween* is the eternal attribute and *Mukawwin* in the created thing, or that Knowledge is the eternal attribute but that which is known is created.

[180] The issue of *Aslaah* will be discussed in detail in the section on 'God's Wisdom'.

[181] Imam Māturīdī argues that when we apply an attribute to God, we accept both the attribute in reality as well as its description. Thus, when we call God 'the Knowledgeable', it means both that He knows and that He has the Attribute of Knowledge.

[182] There is a theological disagreement as to whether one can come to the realisation of God's Attributes based on reason, or whether the basis for the ascription of God's Attributes is solely scripture. God being All-Hearing is one of these attributes. The argument for coming to this understanding based on reason is that when one contemplates, they understand that their Lord must be All-Hearing, because if He were

applicable, and the many other things where there are differences which do not necessitate distinguishing/separating. Not all of these [acts and the results of these acts] are attributed to Him pre-eternally. Why did you [Ka'bī] not make this claim about everything that is attributed to Him, considering [the fact that] it is impossible for Him to transform and be defective, as both of these are signs of *Creatio ex Nihilo*? Furthermore, you know that creating is of different types, and you name Him by some of the [names], and do not name Him by some of the other [names]. Why does this not indicate towards the differences of the Attributes? *God is the grantor of success.*

[Shaykh] Abū Manṣūr,[183] stated that [Ka'bī said that] anything which is connected to the *Qudra* is not an attribute of God's Essence, which according to his opponents signifies that God is not described as having Power towards His Attributes, except in the metaphorical sense to mean the *Mafool*[184], such as the commanded thing is called 'command'.

Furthermore, we have explained the differences with regards to the Essential Attributes in terms of their application,[185] therefore this same application should also be ascribed to other things that have been mentioned.

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not All-Hearing, then this would entail that God is not perfect, and this is similarly applied to the other Attributes of God that one realises based on reason.

[183] al-Māturīdī is called the *Faqeeh* (the Jurist) in a number of places in the book, but because it disrupts the flow, I have chosen not to include these into the main body of the text. We also do not have any of his legal texts currently in existence. They were either lost or never written, despite him providing legal rulings to his community hence him being *Al-Faqeeh*.

[184] *Ism Ma'fool* is a term that is used in Arabic grammar describing the object of an action.

[185] Such as Seeing being applied to that which is seen, and Hearing being applied to that which can be heard (but not in a corporeal sense).

According to [Kaʿbī's] School, God was not a Creator and He was not Merciful but was able to make His Essence such that He is a Creator and is Merciful. According to Kaʿbī's position we can worship the Creator who is Merciful, because He was able to create [the Attribute] that is worshipped by people because these Attributes are connected to God's *Qudra* (Power). Therefore, in reality, according to this idea, the one that is worshipped is not God and based on these principles [God] is also originated because His *Qudra* is connected to [the other Attributes].

Then we ask him, can God not create the creation? If he says 'no', then it becomes necessary that Kaʿbī has made [this attribute] into a creator and his statement will be void, but if he says 'yes', then it becomes necessary that the non-created thing can be created by the *Qudra* being connected to it, and that will necessitate the pre-eternity of the Universe.

[Kaʿbī] also claimed that the speech [of God] is created based on the notion of the 'coming' [of speech], a notion that entails an aspect of being created. [Al Māturīdī responded that] God has also relayed the notion of 'coming' to Himself but that does not mean that He is originated, but He put it in such a way that is befitting of His Divine nature. The same is to be applied to the previous [notion of speech], where we have explained that God is described [using the word] 'speech' based [on the premise] that His changing is impossible. The notion of 'coming' should also be applied to the aspect of His Divine nature, and not to the aspect that is commonly known among created things such as changing and vanishing. Similar to this is the reality of Action and Speech; an example of this is the statement of [the Prophet] Ibrahim who said *"I do not like the things that disappear and set."*[186] Anything that is

[186] Quran, Surah *al-An'am* (6:76)

once in one state and then transforms into another state is among the things that disappear. *And God knows best.*

He supports his position that the word *Hifẓ* [is applied to the] memorisation [of the Quran]. [He adds to this point by stating that] the word [*Hifẓ*] is also applicable to God. It can mean taking care of [something's] constitution or being concerned with what is included in [the content of] speech. The speech that is attributed to God by people is a metaphor, for speech which is understood is His Attribute. What we said about [the meaning of] God 'coming' and 'going' is also applied [to the Quran], which is that it is a metaphor. The commitment and the support of God etc. are literal meanings which are not attributed to God and this is similarly [applied to the] Quran. Kaʿbī supported his position by using the same type of argument to prove [the Quran] to be originated and created, such as the scripture attributing *Naskh* (abrogation) to [the Quran] and the fact that *Surahs* [and] *Ayahs* [are words and letters] which cannot be attributed to God. Then [Kaʿbī] built on his position by arguing that it cannot be an Essential Attribute such as Knowledge, and further claimed that it is not literally called 'knowledge'.[187]

Shaykh Abū Manŝūr said that this claim is incorrect. His claim of the Essential Attributes has been refuted, therefore he should follow [our position] in the Attribute of Knowledge without taking it literally, and [it is the same for] Hearing as well as the other Attributes. We have explained, thanks to God, [with strong proofs] when much weaker proofs would have sufficed for a person of reason. [Kaʿbī] then refuted

[187] The *Mutazalites* hold the position that the Quran is created (by God) and it is not the eternal speech of God. The Hanbalites (whose dogmas Imam Māturīdī explains by way of the *Hashawites* in the *Tawilat*) believe that the Quran as well as its utterance and the speech of God are all eternal. See Footnote 206 for an explanation of the position of Māturīdī.

the *Kalām* (Speech) by [using the example of] the Acts [of God], but according to [Kaʿbī's own] opponent there is no difference between them. He attempted to refute that position by using the argument that based on our observation [of the present Universe], it is possible that a person who is able to speak [decides to remain] silent or is mute. His refutation is incorrect because he should be [giving the example of a person who is] incapable or silent. [His position] is also rebutted [in relation to his belief regarding the attribute of] Action. This is, as he has mentioned, even according to his opponents, where he stated [his position related to] Action and [the verses that when taken literally, create the issue of God 'coming' and] 'going'. Furthermore, 'going' is [in itself an] action, but he [made this error] because of confusion and he then [attempted to] refute this by using the example that an immature child is not mute, even though we said that the [child] is unable [speak].[188] This demonstrates his great incompetence in providing the correct examples for God, instead giving a child and an insane person as a proof. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

In addition, when [Kaʿbī] was criticised, he responded by using [the] examples of [God] acting and speaking [being similar to creation], which [is a simple proof that] every competent person is [able to use]. That is the ignorance of the *Mutazalites*, may they be blessed with the *Tawhīd* for which we are using such proofs.

Shaykh Abū Manŝūr said that the main basis of the issue is the attribution of Speech, Knowledge, Action, and being praised. These are

[188] In this paragraph Māturīdī is referring to a point of contention he had with Kaʿbī, but I was not able to find the details of this discussion in this text. This could be because the current manuscript of '*Kitaab at-Tawheed*' is incomplete - which we know to be the case, but in this instance it lends credence to the idea that I posited earlier that this was never meant to be a book by Imam Māturīdī but instead were notes taken from unstructured lectures that were later compiled into a book by his students.

all attributed to Him without consideration, with Him being free from defects, and with His Glory being devoid of any deficiencies. He is like that pre-eternally.

Bearing in mind [the fact that] if He became the Creator, and the *Ar-Rahman* (The Most Merciful) and the Speaker due to something else, then He cannot also [possess these qualities] - which would mean calling [out to] Him by saying 'oh the One who is not the Most Merciful or is not the Creator', and [if] these words were [used they are] words of degradation. Furthermore, applying [a link between God] and His creation, proves He is the Most Merciful and a Creator by Himself. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

More than that, if God can be named by anything that can occur in something else, then it would be acceptable for God to be named with everything that occurs in anything else. If that would be possible for God, something similar would be possible in what we observe, and if that is impossible with regards to someone to whom changes occur, so it has a greater right to be impossible for Him.[189] *God is the grantor of success.*

[Kaʿbī] then said that by 'the Attributes', what we mean is that they are [not an entity] separate to God, [at the same time] they are not [identical] to His Essence. In addition, any attribute which belongs to the pre-eternal or the originated, none of them are Him. This is [the case for the] word [i.e. Speech of God] or the Book [he means The Quran]. The

[189] al-Māturīdī is arguing against the possibility of naming God by any name. He argues that if the principle is that if you can apply any name to God, then you can apply all names to God, meaning applying degrading names to God would also be possible. Also, it is not possible to apply corporeal names to God that would entail change.

Attributes of God are either words by which we are describing Him, or they are His words and the Book, and both are originated.[190]

[Shaykh] Abū Manṣūr said that I have mentioned Kaʿbī's main statement through which he completed his argument, so that you can see the level of his knowledge about God and His Attributes. So at one [point] he said there is nothing else that is present [other than the Essence of God] and he does not mean that the Attributes are Him. [When he is referring to an act occurring] and he does not mean that [this occurs] by the Attributes [of God], then it means that [this act] does not occur by [God] or by anyone else, but he does not know that these are statements of the ones who attribute. Then [Kaʿbī] said [an example of this is] that if it is my word, then this is actually my word and it would not be anything besides [my word] so that one may claim that [this word] is someone besides me. Furthermore, he said that the Attributes of God are those which have been mentioned [by God], but then he also said that these [Attributes] are Essential Attributes, so [according to him] if it is mentioned, then it is an Essential Attribute, which are His pre-eternal Attributes and they are different to Him. God's glory [does not allow the attribution by] which confused people are describing him. [Kaʿbī] then said that if someone inquires as to the reason why [he did not hold the position that God's] Mercy is a literal Attribute of God without stating that [God] is Merciful, then his response is that being Merciful is an attribute whereas Mercy [is not an attribute]. This is because when anyone performs an act, he is then described by [that act]. For example, if someone insults or curses another person, then he is described as 'the one who insults or curses' and it is the same for creating and mercy. It

[190] The *Mutazalites* argue that the Quran is created. Imam Māturīdī argues that the speech of God is uncreated, but the Quran is letters and words that are the indication of the Speech of God. See footnote 206 for a further explanation.

is not permissible for Him to be described [as being Merciful] until He says; 'I am Merciful', it is in this way that we know that His Attribute is Him stating 'I am Merciful.'[191] *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

[Shaykh] Abū Manṣūr stated that in what way has this confused person gained knowledge about the Attributes [of God] to allow himself to interpret the Attributes of God by this type of confused illusion? God's Divinity does not allow for such attribution. If in the present Universe, an attribute would be a description of the person who is describing it, then the claim of the Universe being a substance or an accident will be void.[192] It will also negate [the notion] that it is amalgamating and separating, in motion or at rest. There would be no substance which would be free from this [issue]. These [issues] are used as proofs for the origination of the Universe, but the description of the person who is describing [these proofs] can be detached from [that which he is describing, meaning that in its essence, the words of description are not the same as that which is being described]. This proves that it is a condition which is necessary for substances and not as he is claiming. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

We then complete these types of senseless arguments, so that my brothers you may thank God for guiding you to His recognition. [We continue this discussion] so that you are able to realise the great

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[191] To summarise al-Māturīdī's perspective on this issue, it is that the application of the Attributes is not a form of anthropomorphism, maintaining that God does not have any similarity to created things, whilst affirming the Attributes. So, God is 'powerful', but it is not like the power of created things, and therefore His power is not like our power.

[192] al-Māturīdī is continuing his argument from the previous paragraph; that when one describes something, the fact that you are describing it does not mean that it is a part of you or that it is you.

misfortune from God towards the people who claim that they know all of the benefits that are coming from God within the religion. Even if God wanted to increase something He would not be able to give something extra beneficial, instead it would cause harm.[193] Therefore, you can assume that when He disowns, He considers it a [form of] guidance in religion, and His misguiding [people] is one of the bounties of God. [Ka'bī] said that we do not say that God created [the colour] red in a dress [but rather] He made it so that 'red' was a description of [the dress]. Because if the redness was not a description or an attribute, then it would be permissible to say that, rather than [say that] God created that [which is] described. It is the same with motion and rest. Furthermore, if someone is writing a letter to another person and he describes the length of an object, it is acceptable to state that he described [the length] in his letter and claimed that it was extremely obvious. We do not say that it is not permissible to say that the 'redness' is the attribute of 'red', or being merciful is the attribute of the act, but instead it is metaphorical, but literally it is as I have explained. He was then asked the question of if it is permissible to describe the description, to which he replied 'yes', with the meaning that 'yes' it is permissible to describe, as long the person who is describing it is articulating the description, but when he stops describing it then it is not permissible.[194]

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[193] Māturīdī is referencing his position which he will expand on in greater detail later in the book, that God creates everything at its most optimum, therefore it is not possible for God to create the Universe in a better way, because what He creates is always at the optimum level of creating.

[194] Al Māturīdī relays the position of al-Ka'bī where his argument is that the Attributes of God are our description as opposed to being the actual Attributes of God. Therefore, 'Mercy' is not an Attribute of God, but instead it is His action, and therefore He should not be described using it. Thus, His attribute is merely God's *saying* He is merciful. It is in the same vein that when God creates redness in a dress, He does not give the dress an attribute. Thus, God merely describes the dress in this manner and

[Shaykh Abū Manŝūr] said just analyse the 'great' level of the *Mutaẓalites* by this person, who has this level of the *Sifaa* and *Mawsoof*, and *Haqeeqa* and *Majaaz*.[195] If it was to be presented to the most ignorant monotheist, he would find it terrifying. On the Day of Judgement [Ka'bī] will be leading his followers [to Hell], and then he will be the reason for them [to get] that which has been described [in terms of punishment in Hell]. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

one can say that it is an attribute tropologically, but in reality, the attribute is God merely stating it.

[195] Imam Māturīdī is ridiculing Ka'bī and the purported weakness of his arguments by saying he doesn't even know basic grammar. In Arabic grammar, the *Mawsoof* is the noun that is being described by an adjective, and the adjective is called the *Sifaa*. *Haqeeqah* refers to the literal and *Majaaz* refers to the metaphorical.

Speech *(Kalām)*

[Shaykh] Abū Manṣūr stated that God has the quality of speech and this is established on the basis of both tradition and reason. As for tradition, we find [the following statement from the Quran] "*God spoke to Musa directly*"[196] Since this is mentioned in the source [the Quran], there should be no dispute among people about the speech of God. Furthermore, there is also a general agreement that God is *Mutakallim* (Speaking) and that He possess *Kalām* (Speech) in reality, despite the fact that there are disagreements as to the nature of [the speech].[197] Moreover, [God] did not negate the demands of the people who said "*why does God not speak to us.*"[198] [Instead] God only described them by [attributing to them] arrogance, ignorance and stubbornness.[199] God also said *"some of them used to listen to the speech of God."*[200]

As for reason, if anyone who is able and knowing does not speak, he does so because of some defect such as a disability, or [due to] some hindrance. But God is free from having [these defects]. Therefore, it stands established that He is speaking. Furthermore, the one who does not speak in the present Universe, the cause for this is his not having the means by which to see or hear because of a defect. But God is free from

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[196] Quran, Surah *an-Nisa*(4:164) God mentioned it by using *Masdar* in order to emphasise the meaning.

[197] The Speech of God is His Eternal Attribute. God does not speak with letters and words

[198] Quran, Surah *al-Baqarah* (2:118)

[199] Māturīdī is arguing that God does not deny that He has speech in these verses, but instead rebukes those who question why God doesn't speak *to them*. As such, Imam Māturīdī argues that God does have speech in reality, even if there are differences with respect to the nature of the speech.

[200] Quran, Surah *al-Baqarah* (2:75)

any modes which result in deafness, blindness and dumbness. In fact, God possessing speech is known by the strongest argument because through it [God] is being praised in the present world. It is based on the faculty of speech humans are superior to animals.[201]

Consider one who possesses speech yet does not speak; this is because of a defect or [due to] silence. Furthermore, suppose it is the speech of someone else, it will result in similarity [to God], [as God mentioned the following statement in the Quran]; *"nothing is in his likeness."*[202] [Therefore it is paramount that one] denies similarity in the attribute as well as within the nature of the speech. He supported the [point] by [mentioning the following statement in the Quran] *"did they create as His creation?"*[203] This results in the similarity of the act, [which] results in similarity [in the nature]. In addition, if the entirety of creation were to work together, they would not be able to produce something similar to it [i.e. The Quran], which refutes [any type of] likeness that would necessitate similarity [with God]. It stands established that the speech [of God] is different to the creation, as His 'nature' is different to their [nature]. Moreover, the various aspects of the speech of creation have not been examined [in order] to find the parameters of their meaning. [For example], God has mentioned the speech of the ants, the *hudhud* bird, and the *tasbee* of the mountains, as well as the [various] other creations [whose speech] is not understood by alphabetic letters nor are they recognised based on human speech.[204] If it is confirmed that there is a

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[201] In terms of reason, Māturīdī argues that anyone not speaking is due to some disability or defect and God is above the attribution of any defects. Speech is also the attribute that distinguishes the humans from the animals. In this section, Imam Māturīdī is using the analogy of the present for the absent.

[202] Quran, Surah *Ash-Shuraa* (42:11)

[203] Quran, Surah *Ar-Ra'd* (13:16)

[204] Sound is not an attribute, as your attribute does not leave you. The attribute is what reacts to everything around you and this can be either positively or negatively. For

type of speech that cannot be comprehended [from amongst the speech of the created things], then it is imprudent to attempt to comprehend the Speech of God. It is in the same manner that the acts of God are beyond the comprehension of the creation. When we have established the differences from all perspectives, it demonstrates the impossibility of the creation being similar to God. It also negates the notion that accidents are amalgamated or in parts, [and that they] increase or decrease. All of these are descriptions of the speech of the creation.[205] *God is the grantor of success.*

Furthermore, if it is due to something else, then the application of the issue that has been mentioned towards God will be avoided by the other [mentioned thing]. That is the sign of [being in need] and the proof of origination. On the other hand, if it will not be through something else, it will be [God] by His Speech, Power and Knowledge. It is permissible to say that what we hear from the creation is the Speech of God based on the common [usage of the word 'speech'], as it is said about the letters, poems and statements. It is evident that [the letters, poems and statements] are things that have been produced by the creation, but it is not possible God is speaking by Himself. Bearing in mind that the heard thing is either an accident, which cannot [simultaneously] be in two locations, or it is a body, which is in the same manner, or it is neither [of them]. These are locations, and it is not possible [for God] to be in in a location, [even though] He hears [that which comes] from a location. It

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example, eating food or sitting. It is the processing of information around you. Your thoughts are there to analyse in your mind or to express verbally. But when the process is in your thoughts there is no sound. Hence the main process of speech before it is expressed is in your mind, which may consist of pictures etc. But none of this 'process' of speech is applicable to God.

[205] Māturīdī is explaining that the Speech of God bears no similarity to the creation, because the Quran clearly states in multiple verses that God is not similar to the creation.

has been established that the reason for it being attributed to God is [the evidence] that we have [previously] mentioned.[206]

Bear in mind that God can make us hear His Speech through something which is not His Speech.[207] For instance, each one of us makes another [person] hear our speech, even though this does not have the exact [nature] of our speech[208]. This is because He made us aware of His Power, Knowledge and Divinity through His creation, even though His creation bears no [similarity] to [God]. *God is the grantor of success.*

If someone [were to] ask 'Did God really make Moses hear His speech, as He said, *"God spoke to Moses."*?[209] , we respond to him that 'God made Moses hear by the letters and sound that He created in the language of Moses. Therefore, God made him hear something which was not created.'[210] The opinion of *waqf*[211] is applicable in two ways. The first is that it is not [the Speech of] God, nor is it [the speech of] someone else,

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[206] Imam Māturīdī argues that the Speech of God is eternal, uncreated, and non-verbal. The Speech from God cannot be heard by the creation but instead God creates letters and sounds through which the creation can hear His Speech. He argues that the recitation of the Quran and the Speech of God are different, but not ontologically different. God causes His creation to hear His Speech by the means of hearing created sounds and letters. Therefore the Quran is the literal indication of the Speech of God.

[207] The position of Māturīdī is that the Speech of God is not audible. He never clarified whether it is not audible at all or whether it is only audible by way of a miracle, although this was the position taken by later Māturīdī scholars; that God creates something which describes the speech of God.

[208] i.e. our 'speech' is our internal monologue or thoughts and we express these thoughts and feelings verbally in an inexact representation of what they really are.

[209] Quran, Surah *An-Nisa* (4:164)

[210] Al Māturīdī argued for the eternity of the Quran, but not the physical created Quran. He also made a distinction between the uncreated Speech of God and human speech (say while reciting The Quran), which is created.

[211] *Waqf* in theology is remaining silent on an issue, or sitting on the fence, as you feel that no one position is stronger than another.

as it is in terms of [the other Attributes such as] Knowledge and Power. The second is that we do not know if it is created or something else, and that is a distant [conclusion][212] because it may mislead [a person] in terms of the fundamentals of the School of Thought. The majority of scholars reject [this position], there being *Ijma* (Scholarly Consensus) that we must know whether it is created or something else. In addition, it is either that we know that He is speaking by Himself - then its meaning is what we have [already] mentioned, or it is not by Himself and therefore it will be through something else but everything other than God has been created by God. All things being created by God has been proven based on Scripture. Therefore, this signifies that the position that it was from something other than God would necessitate origination [of that thing], and origination as well as creation are from God. On the other hand, it is unknown if God is speaking by Himself, so then *waqf* occurs due to a lack of knowledge about the issue. In that type of situation, it is necessary [for a person] to learn and study, as there is no proof that forces one to do *waqf*, but it is only his lack of knowledge that is causing him [to hold that position]. Or he may be doing *waqf* as he does not understand the intention of the one who is asking him about this issue - in the sense that what does he specifically mean by the speech of God and the Quran? Does he mean that this cannot be described by anything that we have mentioned? If that is the case, then he has the right not to answer this question until he understands what is specifically meant.[213]

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[212] Meaning that it is an erroneous conclusion.

[213] Māturīdī is arguing that those who rely on the position of *Waqf* do so due to a lack of knowledge on the issue and not because it is viable position on the issue of the Speech of God.

The Correct Understanding of God's Free Choice *(ʾIkhtiyār)* in Repudiation of Kaʿbī

Kaʿbī stated that the actions of God are by His choice, because natural actions are performed [only] in one manner. [Shaykh] Abū Manŝūr stated that [Kaʿbī] makes a good point and that this is [the position] of the School of the *Ahle Tawhīd* (People of Monotheism). But his statement does not correlate [with the position of] his own school of thought. This is because [when the question is posited about this issue and we ask] is the creation God's choice, or [the choice of] some other, and we also ask the same [questions] about His actions; if he states that it is God's choice, then it signifies that His actions are His choice. [The fact that he is stating] that the actions of God are by His choice signifies that it is His choice and there is nothing else to add [to this point].[214] But if he posits a different position and states that if it is the Act [of God] then it becomes necessary [that the Act will] infinitely occur by choice without having a start, that is not possible because creation is finite. On the other hand, if it will be an action devoid of choice then his claim is negated. The same argument is applicable to the one who describes God by His pre-eternal *Irada* (Will), which is the choice of creating anything at its [appropriate] time. Our proof regarding choice is the [fact that] in their essence, created things are different to one other; they have wisdom and they are signs of the Oneness of God, which proves the choice of everything being as it is. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

[214] In terms of stating that actions are different to choice.

Against Those Who Profess an Autonomous Process of Nature

The people who believe that creation came from nature and [what is in] food, and the ones who believe it is a circumstance of the stars, the Sun and the Moon, and the ones who believe it is an effect of the rotation of orbits, or those who believe in descendants [occurring through] procreation by parents - all of this is based on the existence of something through something else. If it does not have a starting point, then we have mentioned [its proof] with evidence. [On the other hand] if it has a starting point, then [it is bound by] the condition that it is impossible for it to bring itself into existence, or alternatively it is non-existent [and then brings itself into existence], which is also impossible, as this would mean that it is compelled into supervising all [created things], and the absent thing cannot pass on [this ability to supervise]; [the reason for this is] because if it can bring itself into existence at [a specific] time, then it call also cause itself to be brought into non-existence, which is problematic. The other option is that it will bring itself into existence, after [already] coming into existence, which proves existence through something else.[215] *God is the grantor of success.*

Furthermore, everything that has been mentioned are types of inanimate things, except for parents, whose knowledge does not extend to arranging the basis of their children, [they] who are oblivious that [their unborn child] may not be as they had hoped, and if their [children] are corrupted they are unable to reform them. They do not possess the

[215] al-Māturīdī spends a significant amount of time refuting the position of the Naturalists. He states that God caused some things to perish whilst other things He kept in a state of change such as motion and rest, which is one of the proofs that God acts by His free choice. He also argued that since God has the freedom to choose, He then must have the power to create the Universe according to His own Will.

competency to comprehend the things which are hidden from them, never mind being able to control [manifest] things, as well as the many other things that disprove that they are the reason for their [own] existence. In terms of inanimate things, they do not possess knowledge about that which benefits them, and neither are they aware of things that may protect them. It signifies that the things which occur through nature, as well as nourishment, transpire by the design of a Wise and Knowledgeable [Creator], who created them so that they contain both benefits and harms. Seeing as though [some] animals have needs that do not exist in other [animals] which we have mentioned, such as [the varying processes of] hearing and seeing, this is particularly [found in] humans, who have the capacity to speak and are able to distinguish and discover [the various created things] - despite [the fact that this ability] does not occur immediately [in humans] but instead develops as they grow [and this development] occurs by being nurtured by their parents. This has no effect [on the parents], so then how can such a thing influence their children?[216]

All things have finite limits, and once these have been reached, they will stop growing in their length, width, hearing, seeing and reason. Instead, all things [then] begin to decrease despite their nourishment and perpetuation, which signifies that their nature is such, not because of what the [Naturalists] mentioned but because of the One who is Knowledgeable, the One from whom nothing escapes. And [God is] Divine by Himself, so [there is] nothing [that can] incapacitate Him.

Furthermore, [in terms of] the various types of substances that have been mentioned, it is possible for them to be harmed and [equally] it is possible [for things to] to benefit them, and these [various attributes are]

[216] The fact that God restores what has perished and brings into existence things that do not exist can only happen by having choice.

contradictory. It is not conceivable [for them] to converge in order to help one another, which signifies that whatever the thing may be, it has been formed by another. This is because anything that is in a specific configuration by itself cannot change as long as it remains itself.

In addition, based on our observations, all living things yield to their needs and desires. If that was not the case, they would not be in need of nourishment and as such that would then be a reason for them to not be in need. It is not conceivable that [something can] provoke its [own] desire and create its [own] need. Furthermore, it cannot be that the desire as well as the need [exist] by themselves and this is because of the following details: Existence by itself signifies not being in need, and it cannot be the existence because of something else that is unable to cause the need. The thing which exists by itself cannot disappear, because it is not in need of something else. This is because it is not possible that something can make itself so that it is in need of something else. Instead, if it were to create itself so that it was in need of something else by itself, and then without being in need it would no longer remain [in existence], it stands established that there is something else that initially created it so that it was in need, and [this Creator] designed them so that they had desires and created them with needs and the capacity to fulfil their desires. So, in [reality the proof that is] used to deny the Knowledge of the Creator, is [in fact] the proof of His existence. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Furthermore, there is no substance in the Universe which is not controlled by something, and that without this control its existence would be easier and gratifying. [Which would mean that it could] remain in one place [at rest] or in continuous motion [on its own], [or it could] nurture the livelihood of something else. This is the system of the entire Universe, and it is not possible that something which is controlled by

[something external to] itself will possess the ability to control [something else], since to do so is *Ginaa* (making something else self-sufficient) and it cannot [even] dispel [the condition of] being controlled from itself. It signifies that all these things have a Knowledgeable controller, who knows their needs and who causes them to not be in need and He created them in this way. We need each other to live and to continue, even if we do not possess the understanding of the ways in which we need each other. We also do not know how to dispel from ourselves the quality of being in need. This signifies that there is a Knowledgeable supervisor who supervises everyones' condition.

If we were to find the most perfect condition and expert supervisor, and were to ask him to control his own condition and circumstances, in terms of Space and Time with all [specific] details, he would be unable to do so. [This would be even more the case] for those ones that are less [able] than him. No one is able to break free from the parameters of Time and Space, never mind those lesser than him. No one is able to escape the condition of dependence on Time or Space by oneself. [Hence,] it stands established that it is not possible that the Universe be as it is without someone who is [not affected by] its parameters. In terms of being in need, it needs someone who is Self-sufficient, Knowledgeable and Powerful. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Against Those Who Profess an Eternal Material Substance (*Tina*)

[In terms of] one who believes that the *Hayūla* (Prime Matter) of the Universe is pre-eternal, if he believes its substance meets the same conditions as the Universe itself, then all of the issues [i.e. of createdness] which are applicable to the Universe will also be applicable to the substance of this raw material - in terms of it being in need and it suffering from inability [i.e. it is non-omnipotent]. Both of these are signs of the origination of the Universe and that it came into existence via something else. Whatever we explained about the Universe will also be applicable to the raw material.[217]

On the other hand, if it is not a substance [and instead] is self-sufficient and powerful and is not affected by desires causing it look to others for fulfilment [of these desires], then we need to analyse its self-sufficiency and strength. It could be that the Universe came [into existence] after it had been affected by certain things such that it transformed so that it possessed needs and desires. Therefore, it is possible that its [actual] substance can be affected by having needs and desires due to this transformation and [resulting] change. This means that all of the conditions for self-sufficiency and strength are not present, meaning that its [substance] became the main basis and source of desires [and being in need] and therefore the supervision of a Wise and Knowledgeable [Creator] becomes necessary.

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[217] See Footnote 116, as in this section Shaykh Abū Manṣūr is revisiting the position of the Philosophers who believe in pre-eternal matter, which some of them refer to as *Hayūla*

[Their proposition] is that the entire Universe became so that it was in this state, or that the raw material remained in [its original] state but the entire Universe was contained within it and then [the Universe] appeared [from within it] naturally - which is the opinion of the people who believe in *Hayūla.* Then everything which was in the Universe was destroyed, in terms of unnaturally [existing] in other things and then emerged naturally. For example, they posit that each human was within sperm, trees and plants were in seeds, and that this is the way of all substances. [Also, for them it is the] exact same thing in regard to the continuous [processes] being hidden within food etc. Therefore, it becomes necessary that it is the same for the Prime Matter, which is their claim pertaining to the *Hayūla,* because the both of them are the basis of the Universe.

Against the *Karamites*

Furthermore, this explanation is also applicable to the *Karamites.*[218] This is because they hold the position that the entirety of the Universe is literally within the 'First Initiator'. God nurtures the entity, and this entity supports the *Hayūla,* and the Universe is constructed from this *Hayūla.* It necessitates the existence of the first source. This is applicable to everything which is not naturally in another thing but appears naturally. They consider our present existence [i.e. the Universe] as proof of the initial [cause]. The first is the substance of the entity and the second is substance of the particles. It then became the substance of everything but is recognised by the substance of particles and that is because no one is able to comprehend [the entirety] by using their senses. If these [points] are established, then what we have explained [previously] is also applicable [in this case], in terms of being in need, having desires and the occurrence of incidents, which signifies the origination of the initial basis [of the Universe], because it can be affected by evanescence and annihilation. This also refutes the claim of the *Karamites*, even if they posit that it came into existence after not being.[219] *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

The fact is that the Universe is benighted and unaware of what is unnaturally [contained within] it, and of the condition of what is [contained within] it, who is in it and what will happen from it. It is the same [case] as I previously mentioned in terms of the lack of awareness by semen and seeds. This is also applicable to the *Hayūla* and the other

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[218] The *Karamites* are followers of Isamaili Shi'sm. They rose to fame for their rebellion against the Abbasid Caliphate.

[219] The *Karamites* believed in God but also held that matter is pre-eternal and that the Universe was contained within this pre-eternal matter.

[related cases] they have claimed. Therefore, it becomes necessary that the one that they claim exists does not possess the competence to supervise [the Universe], and nothing in the Universe came into existence because of it. But if it existed, so that [existence] occurred due to someone who knows what is going to happen, and from it He [meaning God] made its foundation appear. He will unnaturally create with it [something that] appears natural, by creating substances and places for it so that it can grow, which is the actual belief of Monotheism. He is the one who created everything in its initial [state] and everything existed through Him in the condition that they have claimed, or He is Infinite Creator of everything by His own Will, [and is able to create] in any way that pleases Him, as is claimed by the Monotheists.

If God is initially able to create something, which at the outset is going to be the foundation of something else, then He is initially able to create everything in whatever manner pleases Him, without explicitly and unnaturally engaging in it [and] without making it emerge naturally, but instead by creating it [directly or *Ex Nihilo*]. On the other hand, if they were to argue that everything was camouflaged in the substance of the main foundation [of the Universe], and then it appeared naturally, then even that [position] will be according to what we have stated. They posited the evidence of the seed and semen. Consider the weakness of such arguments, because reason rejects the possibility of the substance of large objects being hidden within the substance of smaller objects. This is based on observation [of reality] and [demonstrates] the contentious [nature of their statement].[220]

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[220] There are some who believe that everything in the Universe was physically contained within the 'Prime Matter'. They give the example of how a human is contained within 'semen' or a plant is contained within a seed. al-Māturīdī is arguing that something that is larger in dimension cannot physically be contained within

The foundation [of the Universe] which they identify as the raw material, or *Hayūla*, or initiator, or entity, that can create the Universe without the Universe being [contained within this entity] or naturally, can create what and how it wants, without anyone being able to oppose its will and no one can replace it in the supervision [of the Universe]. This is [in fact] the statement of Monotheism. They may name [God] by other names, but [God] is the name of the creator and initiator of the Universe according to the Monotheists. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

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something that is smaller in dimension to it. He argues that this is based on our observation of the laws of nature. Although, the proponents of this position argue that 'Prime Matter' from which the Universe originated is without size, shape or dimension. Therefore, they do not argue that a large object came from a smaller object.

The Correct Understanding of God's Names (*Asma'*)

Shaykh] Abū Manṣūr stated that our stance in regard to the linguistic classification of the names of God [is that they] are of several [categories]. The first type refers to the names by which we call Him. These [names] are different to one another, because we call Him 'Knowledgeable' which is different to [calling Him] 'Powerful'. This is the elucidation of when one says that God has such-and-such number of names. It is similar to when it is mentioned that God created such-and-such Mercy, but it does not mean that God displays this Mercy by using a created mercy, because it is not possible that initially God was not merciful and then He became Merciful by this created mercy.[221] He then passed this mercy onto His creation, but it is called [the name 'mercy'] because it was due to His Mercy, and it is similar to the name of Paradise, the rain, and the various other things that are [known as and] called 'the mercy of God'. It is comparable to statements where one states that 'it was his command', but in reality, it was not his command but it was *because of* his command.[222] *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

The second [type] refers to the meaning that it is pertaining to His Essence, which the creation is unable to know except by Him, despite

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[221] This is a well-known disagreement between the Māturīdī and *Ashari* School. Shaykh Abū Manṣūr holds the position that God is pre-eternally Merciful, He was always Merciful and as such He is eternally named as 'The Merciful'. The *Asharis* argue that one cannot name God 'Merciful' until the Attribute of mercy is applied, even though He possess the eternal Attribute of Mercy. This disagreement is like the question regarding whether someone can be called 'a writer' before he writes anything or can an artist be named an 'artist' before he creates a piece of work.

[222] Shaykh Abū Manṣūr classifies the Names of God into three categories. The first is the names that we call God, but they are other than Him.

the fact that His Divinity cannot be comprehended by letters [and words], and this differs due to the variances in the language which refers to His actual Essence. [For example, the Names of God] such as *Al-Wahid* (The Unique), Allah, the Merciful, the Existing, the Pre-eternal and the Worshipped One.[223]

The third[224] is linked to the linguistic derivation of the Attributes such as the Knowledgeable, the Powerful, which in reality, if they were to refer to someone else would [give an indication of a form of] change, which would make it necessary that naming [God] by them would not be referring to their real commonly understood meaning.[225] *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

This would then mean that it is acceptable to name [God] with anything that is used to name other things, as long as we do not denote the meaning that is [commonly] understood. We then [make further] inquiries of those who believe that God does not have pre-eternal knowledge and that these names are originated. We ask them [what was] God's [state] before He created the creation? Did He know Himself? Did He know what He does or [does] not [do]? Also, did He or did He not know anything with His Essence? If the answer is no, then [it means that] He was ignorant until He created knowledge and He became

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[223] The second are those Names that pertain to His Essence and cannot be comprehended by His creation and must be accepted in the way in which they were revealed by God.

[224] The third are the Attributes that come through derivation, because in the present world there is no other way of attempting to grasp what is meant by the Attributes.

[225] Shaykh Abū Manŝūr is explaining the position of those who posit that when one calls God 'knowledgeable' it is not the same as when one is referring to a created thing using the same word. This is because it is commonly known that one's level of knowledge changes, but this is not the case with God, and this is the reason why there is always an addition to the application of the word 'knowledge' to God, such as adding the word 'eternal' and 'unchanged' to the statement.

knowledgeable because [of the creation of this knowledge]. On the other hand, if He knew it, then did He or did He not become knowledgeable by His Essence? If He became knowledgeable by the knowledge of His Essence, then it becomes necessary He was pre-eternally in this state. Therefore, attributing this name [of God] to others will contravene monotheism.[226]

[226] According to Imam Māturīdī, the Attributes of God are classified into three categories; the first are the Essential Attributes (*Al-Sifaat al-Dhatiyyah*), the second are Positive Attributes (*Al-Sifaat al-Thubutiyyah*) and the third are Active Attributes (*Al-Sifaat al-Filiyyah*

All Names Apply to God Eternally (With a Critique of Jahm bin Safwan)

The focal position of the people who deny the Attributes of God is that they say that God did not have this name, and He did not have an Attribute such as 'Knowledge', which means that [God] knows pre-eternally by His Essence. Therefore, they reject the Names and Attributes, as they postulate that all of [the Attributes imply] origination, as stated by Jahm[227] when he said [in reference to God's Attributes] that [it cannot be that] *'He was not knowledgeable nor powerful, and then He knew,'* [he argued that] God's Divinity and purity does not allow for [any of] these [attributions]. We then ask him [i.e. Jahm] of the situation if [God] knew His [state] pre-eternally, as this would necessitate the name pre-eternally, whereas if He did not know that He is knowledgeable, then it would necessitate the name 'ignorant', which even according to them cannot be avoided. This is because according to them the meaning of 'knowledge' is not being ignorant. Therefore, if [God] was not pre-eternally knowledgeable, it denotes that He was pre-eternally ignorant. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Furthermore, we then discuss with them about [issues related to] Knowledge, because according to them it was not [present] and then it [later appeared]. If this is the case, it would imply that this is also the case with all things. Bearing in mind that [according to them] He can be

[227] Jahm Bin Safwan was born in Kufa and died in 746 AD. He was considered the leader of the *Jahmites*. His books have not survived and as such his positions are only viewed from the perspective of his opponents, such as in the above chapter where Shaykh Abū Manṣūr is relaying his alleged position about the Attributes of God. Jahm also denied that the physical Quran was eternal, was against anthropomorphism, and espoused determinism - that man is devoid of Free Will.

affected by Knowledge even when He did not have *Qudra* (Power/Ability) and nor did others [possess this power/ability]. This terminates their claim of [following] monotheism. We then ask them about the issue where they say He was Knowledgeable by Himself before creating, but He did not have Knowledge in reality, then [the question arises that] how did He know His Essence? If He had Knowledge in reality, then this claim that [the Names of God] are originated is negated. On the other hand, if Jahm states that God Knows without being Knowledgeable or being able to [know], then the [refutation] that I mentioned will also be applicable to this argument, in terms of the [proofs] that I have mentioned in reference to the [purported] impossibility of pre-eternally attributing Knowledge to Him, with the refutation of it implying origination.

On the other hand, if Jahm was to posit that God knew through others, by God observing by the various incidents [i.e. events in the life of the Universe or man] that affected [God's Knowledge] and [that is how the] Universe came into existence, Jahm's position will coincide with those atheists who believe in the *Hayūla* (Primal Raw Material) and that of the *Thanawi's,* who believe that the Universe came into existence due to various incidents that affected its foundation. Essentially, this point is related to the issue of the Attributes which we have [previously] mentioned. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Anthropomorphic Descriptions of God in the Quran: God Sitting on the Throne (*Al-ʾIstawā ʿAlā al-ʿArsh*)

[Shaykh] Abū Manṣūr said that Muslims disagreed on the issue of [ascribing] location [to God]. Some of them said [that] God is on the *ʿArsh*, and that He is settled on the *ʿArsh*. According to [their belief], the *ʿArsh* is a throne which is carried by the Angels surrounding it. God said [in following verse of the Holy Quran] *"the ʿArsh of your Lord is carried by eight"*[228] and He said *"you will see the Angels surrounding the ʿArsh"*[229] and He said *"and the ones who are carrying the ʿArsh and the ones who are around it"*[230] and they have supported their opinion with the verse *""The Most Merciful [who] established al-ʿArsh ʾistawā""*[231]

The people who raise their hands towards the sky during prayer and hope for the benefits that they desire [from God] posit that God came [to that location] after [previously] not occupying [that location][232], because of [their understanding] of the verse *"after that He settled on the*

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[228] Quran, Surah *Al-Haqqah* (69:17)

[229] Quran, Surah *Az-Zumar* (39:75)

[230] Quran, Surah *Al-Ghafir* (40:7)

[231] Quran, Surah *At-Taha* (20:5)

[232] Shaykh Abū Manṣūr is relaying the position of the Anthropomorphists, who apply a literal meaning to these verses and as such come to the conclusion that God is a corporeal being. They hold the position that God is literally sitting on the throne. There are different levels of Anthropomorphists; some of them hold the belief that God is literally sitting on the throne but do not accept that God is literally the fourth person listening to a whispered conversation (see quote below) and instead will give a metaphorical interpretation to this specific verse. There are other Anthropomorphists who accept the literal interpretation of all these verses.

throne".[233] Some of them say that [God] is everywhere[234] because of the verse ***"whenever three people are whispering, God is the fourth"***[235] and the verse, ***"We are closer to him than his jugular vein"***[236] and God said, *"We are closer to him than you, but you do not see it.*[237] And God said *"He is on the sky and the Earth".*[238] They make the assumption that if you say that God is in one location rather than [in] another, it will necessitate a limit [to God]. [We know] that anything that has limits is smaller than [the thing by which it is limited] and [in turn that thing] is larger than it, and [this type of ascription] is a defect. Therefore, it necessitates a location and it results in [God] being finite, which is impossible unless the space is larger [than God], which [based on our observation of the present Universe] is puerile. If someone were to choose a location [for God] which is not sufficient for Him, then the limit of this space will be the limit of God, and God's Divinity does not allow [that which they ascribe to Him]; whilst others denied ascribing location, or [argued] that no location can be [attributed to God] except metaphorically, which would mean that [when a location is used it means that] He is the Maintainer of [the Universe] and has Knowledge of everything.

Shaykh Abū Manŝūr said that the general principle in the notion of the ascription of the *Kulli* (universal things) to God and vice versa is in fact God describing Himself in terms of His Sublimity, Elevation, Majesty and Glory; such as when God said *'To Him belongs the possession of the*

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233 Quran, Surah *Al-Furqan* (25:59)

234 Imam Māturīdī is presenting the purported position of those who argue that God is everywhere, and that the basis of their position is that one cannot ascribe a particular place to God and therefore He is everywhere, as God is Powerful and Omnipresent.

235 Quran, Surah *Al-Mujadila* (58:7)

236 Quran, Surah *Al-Qaf* (50:16)

237 Quran, Surah *Al-Waqi'ah* (50:16)

238 Quran, Surah *Al-Waqi'ah* (43:84)

Heavens and the Earth[239] and *'the Lord of the Heavens and the Earth*[240]as well as [verses that are related] to the creation [such as] '*Lord of the Worlds*[241] [so all of these are issues related to the general things].[242] In terms of ascribing particular things to God, it comes from the notion that God is showing [the thing] respect and favouring it, in terms of nobility, dignity and superiority[243] such as we find [in the following verse of the Holy Quran;] *'God is with those who are conscious of Him'*,[244] and [the ascription to God such as when God] said '*that is the mosque of God*[245] or *'the camel of God*[246] or the house of God etc. Similarly, people's relation to each other is also conceived in this way. We do not discount the possibility that accrediting creation to God can have the same implication as accrediting a specific creation to another specific creation; it can imply that one is

[239] Quran, Surah *Al-Furqan* (25:2). God is attributing the ownership of the skies and Earth to himself

[240] Quran, Surah *Az-Zukhruf* (43:82)

[241] Quran, Surah *Al-Yunus* (10:10)

[242] Shaykh Abū Manŝūr is explaining that whenever God makes a *Kulli* (general) attribution to Himself such as in the Quran "*And He is the subjugator over His servants, and He is the Wise, the Acquainted [with all]*" (6:18), it means that He is attributing Glory to Himself.

[243] When God mentions a *Juzi* (a particular thing), it means that God is making it respected or showing that the thing is of high standing and that God is showing it some favour.

[244] Quran, Surah *An-Nahl* (16:128)

[245] Quran, Surah *Ash-Shams* (91:13)

[246] Quran, Surah *al-A'raf* (7:73)

showing his favour towards another.[247] The general ascription of one creation to another implies the meaning of 'power'.[248]

[Shaykh] Abū Manŝūr stated that the initial principle of this is that God was there and there was no location. It is possible for a location to become evanescent and [irrespective of this occurrence] God will remain as He was, without any change. He is now as He was before and God is free from change, annihilation and transformation. Every one of these are indications of origination; they signify [the created] Universe and are proofs of the possibility of annihilation. This is because in terms of [annihilation] or transforming from one state to another state, it is the same as transforming from one entity to another entity. The reason for this is because the both of them did not transpire on their own, which signifies that they are also [subject] to change. [For] anything that does not exist in and of itself, it is possible that it can change and be annihilated.[249] *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Furthermore, when one ascribes a location to God, irrespective of whether [it includes] all locations, then they are attributing need to God for the thing [upon] which He settles [(exists)], which [would make God]

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[247] An example of this would when a King states that a specific person is 'one of his people.' It means that the King is honouring that person by ascribing the person to himself. So when God is ascribing something such as a house to Himself, He is honouring that house and giving it a special preference, such as in the case of the *Kaabah* (the House of God).

[248] For example, if one were to say that 'France belongs to the King', it is not an example of favouring but instead it is demonstrating his power. Therefore, the same metaphor that is used for God can be used for the creation, but what is used for creation cannot be used for God.

[249] Shaykh Abū Manŝūr simultaneously deals with the argument of those who believe that God is one place, or is concurrently in all places, as God being in a places makes change and motion necessary, which is a sign of being originated. As such, He cannot be in a place or in all places.

the same as each one of the bodies and accidents that exist in a location, [as] they move within [the location] and settle in it. [And this] despite the fact that all of this would mean that the Universe does not exist in a location. Therefore, the One who brought the entire Universe into existence, sustained and maintained it, is not in a location as His Divinity does not allow for Him to be in need of a location. His Divinity does not allow for such description when [even] the entirety of creation does not exist [just] within space, even though the [specific] details and parts that are inside of the Universe [do] exist within space.[250] In addition, if we believe that God is in a location, that can only be the case if God was a part of the Universe, which is the sign of a defect. It would also become necessary that the Universe can exist in no location, and if all of the Universe can exist in no location then God [too] can exist (and is in a better position to) exist in no location.[251] *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

[250] al-Māturīdī is referring to the notion that there is a possibility that the entirety of created things do not exist only in space. For example, things such as the Soul; where does it exist - inside or outside of the Universe and Space-time?

[251] Imam Māturīdī's second argument is that if God is in one place or all places, He is limited by the location that He is in, which means that God will be smaller than the space that contains Him and that would mean that He is finite.

The Differing Views of the Throne as well as the Possibility of a Localisation of God

[Shaykh] Abū Manṣūr continues that [in terms of those who hold the position that God] exists on the *'Arsh* and [that the] *'Arsh* is such a location[252] that [God] Himself is there, or that He is everywhere, [such a person] has three [possible] options: It is either that the space is bigger than Him, or they are equal [in size or dimension], or He is bigger than the space. If it is the first option, then [we observe] that anything that is surrounded by another thing is smaller [than the thing that surrounds it], which would mean that [God is] lesser than the creation, as He would be [physically] smaller [than the space that surrounds Him]. Furthermore, if one were to describe God by stating that He is surrounded by space, then it will necessitate that Time is also applicable to Him, that He has a beginning and end and that He is finite, which would [again] mean that He is lesser than His creation. On the other hand, if it is according to the second possibility, it would be necessary that when the [size of the] creation increases, God will once again become less than the creation, [so] then whatever we stated [in terms of the] first possibility will also be applicable in this instance. In terms of the third possibility, it will necessitate the repugnant condition [because the space that He is located in is smaller than Him] as well [His being in] need. More than that, it will become necessary that He was unable to create something that would be sufficient for Him. If one were to consider that something similar were to happen to a King - that the King would sit or exist in something which is not sufficient [for him], it would be considered quite a repugnant [situation]. Furthermore, it will

[252] For the word *'Makaan'*, I have used the translation 'space' and 'location' interchangeably depending on the context, as 'location' means a point in space/time.

necessitate that God has parts [meaning that He can be broken up into parts], because some of Him will be hanging[253] [from the space, as He will be larger than the space which He is attempting to occupy]. All of these signify created things and God's Divinity [does not allow for such ascription].

Furthermore, there is no glory in being in a higher location, or sitting on a higher location, or standing [at a higher location]. [For example], there is no glory when a person is standing on top of the house, or standing on top of a mountain. [The person is] not of higher standing than those people who are beneath the house or mountain. [The reason for this is] because they are all humans. That is why it is not permissible to give these types of interpretations to the above-mentioned verses. [This is] because the above-mentioned verses are mentioned in the context of Glorifying God. As [God] states in the [the Quran in the following] verse *'He is your Lord, the one who created the skies and the Earth'*.[254] [Therefore when God is ascribing the *'Arsh* to Himself], it means that He is glorying the *'Arsh*. It implies that the *'Arsh* could be made from such a thing as light or it could be some [other] substance that humans cannot comprehend. There is a *hadith* that has been mentioned[255] where the Prophet is describing the Sun and he said "Gabriel brings forth a palm full of light to the Sun and puts it on as some of you put on your clothes,

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[253] Shaykh Abū Manŝūr means that if God was in space, for instance on the *Arsh,* and He was bigger than the space that contains Him, it means His excess size would be hanging outside of that space.

[254] Quran, Surah *al-A'raf* (7:54)

[255] He states the word *Ruhyaa* before mentioning the *hadith* which is a form of criticism. Although, in the context of the statement, it does not appear to be that Shaykh Abū Manŝūr is criticising the *hadith* and instead he is using it as proof.

and he does this before sunrise". And it is also mentioned about the Moon, that he brings a palm full of light from the *'Arsh* [to it].[256]

In terms of ***'istawāa*** being attributed to Him, then it has two [possible] meanings. It is either that He is being glorified by the things that are mentioned after [the word] *''istawāa'*, because in [the instance after the word *''istawāa'*] God mentions His Kingdom, His *Raboobiyah* (Divinity) and His creation. The second [possible] reason is that He mentioned it [to signify that] it is the most glorious creation and in customary usage it is known that this mode of ascription is to attribute things to the most glorious things.[257] For example, stating that a person conquered such-and-such country or took such-and-such place under his possession. This does not mean that it is specifically referring to [only] this [specific ascription], [meaning] that it does not specifically mean that he only conquered that country, but [rather] because it is known that the person who can conquer that country can conquer everything. It is the same as when God said [in the Holy Quran in the following verse] *'today I have completed your religion'*.[258] This verse was revealed in *Makkah* and the Prophet was at the centre of the *Umm ul-Quraa* (the centre of the towns).[259] Also [God] stated that today the disbelievers lost their hope in

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[256] He means that the both of them are from this creation which is known as the *Arsh*.

[257] By stating that 'Joe Bloggs has conquered the United States', you are in fact implying that if he can conquer the United States, he can conquer any country, because the United States is the foremost Superpower and hence the most difficult to conquer.

[258] Quran, Surah *al-Ma'idah* (5:3)

[259] Shaykh Abū Manṣūr is explaining that when God ascribes specific things to something that is more glorious, it is a way of signifying its glory and importance. So the verse of the Quran *'today I have completed your religion'* was revealed in Mecca and there were many more verses which are of equal importance that were revealed later in Madinah. Thus, it was a way of signifying the importance of that particular situation. Furthermore, as Imam Māturīdī explains, when God mentions that He sent the

[attempting to] stop your message. As well as [God] mentioning that He sent the Prophets to the Pharaohs, and that He sent the message to the *Umm ul-Quraa* (the centre of the towns), but it does not mean that God has [only] sent the message to those people or only to this city which is the centre of the towns, but [instead] God mentions these significant things to express their importance, and it is in the same vein that this is also applicable to the *'Arsh*. It is also [the same situation where] God mentions that He sent punishment to the *'greatest oppressors,'*[260] or the punishment being sent to the *'wealthiest people.'*[261],[262]

Furthermore, it is possible that God has mentioned all of these verses [such as the verse about *'istawāa*], to mean that no location can be attributed to God, because from the point of view of the creation, the *'Arsh* is the highest place. This is because the creation cannot comprehend any space beyond the *'Arsh*, so [when] God refers to the [*'Arsh*] it means that God's [Divinity] does not allow Him to be in a location nor to be in need of a location.[263] It is in the same manner that we understand the verse, *"if there are three people whispering then He is the fourth"*,[264] as whispering has no relevance to location. Therefore, what

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message to the *Umm ul-Quraa* (the centre of the towns), it does not mean that God has *only* sent the message to those particular people.

[260] Quran, *Surah al-An'am* (6:123)

[261] Quran, *Surah al-Isra* (17:16)

[262] It does not mean that God is only referring to them, rather it means is that if the punishment [of God] can reach those people that are from the highest echelons of society, then it can quite easily reach the common folk that cause oppression as well. So even though God has mentioned these two specific categories, it also includes everyone else.

[263] al-Māturīdī is attempting to explain that one of the possibilities of the meaning *Arsh* is that it is the highest point in creation and one cannot comprehend its location; then this is even more the case for God, who is the creator of the *Arsh* and everything else.

[264] Quran, Surah *Al-Mujadila* (58:7)

God is actually implying is that He is beyond location and nothing can be hidden from Him. It is in the same way that He has expressed His Power, by saying, *"We are closer to you than your jugular vein"*,[265] which signifies that He is close to you by His Power and strength. It is in the same manner that God has expressed that He is God and is worshipped everywhere, this is because [all] places are places of worship, [such as when God mentioned in the following verse of the Quran] *"He is God in the sky and on Earth."*[266] In the same way He expressed that *"To Him belongs the dominion of the skies and the Earth"*[267] He also expressed that He is more Glorious than everything else by stating that *"He is the subjugator over His creation"*[268]and He also said that *"He has Knowledge of everything"*[269] as well as that *"He has power over all things."*[270] Therefore, in these verses God has included a general concept, for which He has provided detailed explanations in other verses. [The reason for this is] so that everyone is able to understand that everything that has been explained belongs to Him due to Himself, and not because of the creation. It is in the same vein [that we attribute to God] Glory, that He is not in need and that He is Great. God's Divinity is such that no one is similar to Him and there is no other God besides Him.

On the other hand, some of them explained that the linguistic meaning of *'Arsh* is 'kingdom'.[271] [This is] because linguistically this word is used for anything which is in a high place, such as the roof of a house or the

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[265] Quran, *Surah Qaf* (50:16)

[266] Quran, Surah *Az-Zukhruf* (43:84)

[267] Quran, Surah *Al-Baqarah* (2:107)

[268] Quran, Surah *Al-An'am* (6:18)

[269] Quran, Surah *Al-An'am* (6:101)

[270] Quran, Surah *Hud* (11:4)

[271] In this section Shaykh Abū Manṣūr is refuting those who apply the metaphorical and linguistic meanings towards these verses. The focus of his refutation are the *Mutazalites*, but it is a position that was later followed by the *Ashari* School.

top of a tree. In terms of the [linguistic meaning of] *'istawāa* they say that there are three [possible] meanings; [the first possible meaning is that it is referring to] 'conquest', such as when people state that such-and-such person 'conquered' the city. The second [possible] meaning is that [it is referring to being 'raised', such as in the [following] verse [where] it is mentioned *"And when you have raised the ship."*[272] The third [possible meaning] is that it means being 'perfect' and 'complete', [such as in the verse] *"And when he attained his full strength and was [mentally] mature"*[273],[274], whilst some others said that it means to 'intend' or to 'desire' [based on the interpretation] that the linguistic scholars provided for the meaning of the [following] verse *"Then He turned Himself to the Heaven"*;[275] that by stating that 'He turned' [this meant that] God intended to create, [and He conveyed this] by relating it to how created things act[276] when they want to do something, in that they intend one thing after another, despite the fact that [in reality this is not really] considered as 'intending'. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

[This can be seen by the following lines of poetry, where the] poets stated that 'I thought that your *'Arsh* does not disappear or change' and another poet said 'When the *'Arsh* of the *Banu Marwaan* will be taken from them, they will collapse as *Yaad* and *Himyad* collapsed'. Nabighah [another poet] said 'it is the *'Arsh* that become evanescent after being glorious, and they collapsed after reaching safety and wealth', whilst

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[272] Quran, Surah *Al-Mu'minun* (23:28)

[273] Quran, Surah *Al-Qasas* (28:14)

[274] This is because when you have reached maturity, you have perfected or completed the biological and mental process of reaching adulthood.

[275] Quran, Surah *Fussilat* (41:11)

[276] Shaykh Abū Manŝūr said that the example of creation was provided in terms of how the creation itself acts, so that we may attempt to understand the point that has been made in terms of the context of the verse.

others stated that 'the son of *Jafnaa* and the son of the one whose *'Arsh* has collapsed, after his warriors were hoping for success.'[277]

[Shaykh] Abū Manṣūr explained that the elucidation of this is that if it were to refer to a conquest and the meaning of *'Arsh* is 'kingdom', this is not an acceptable [interpretation]. [The reason for this is] because God controls the creation and this interpretation signifies two things. [The Quran says that] *He is the sustainer of the great 'Arsh,*[278] [if it] means the 'Great Kingdom' it necessitates that there are also other kingdoms, and this [kingdom] being surrounded and carried by the Angels can also be applied to these [other kingdoms].[279] *God is the grantor of success.*

On the other hand, if one were to accept the meaning of 'being completed', or 'perfecting something' or 'raising in rank', then it will mean that when God said *"Are you disbelieving in the One that created the Earth in two days?"*[280] and *"He completed them as seven Heavens in two days"*[281] He has independently mentioned whatever He had created in the six days, and He then summarised and mentioned [what He has created in the six days] generally, such as in the following verse, *"Indeed, your Lord is Allah, who created the Heavens and Earth in six days, and then He Al-'istawā 'Alā al-'Arsh"*,[282] as this explanation was in the context of creating those

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[277] Imam Māturīdī is providing examples of how based on different contexts, the word *'Arsh'* denotes different meanings. Therefore, insisting that it can only mean 'throne', and that God is located on a throne is an interpretation that has been falsely imposed on the Quran.

[278] Quran, Surah *At-Tawbah* (9:129)

[279] al-Māturīdī is postulating that if one argues that God is ruler of the 'Great Kingdom', then it means that there are other 'kingdoms' which could be 'lesser' or 'equivalent' to the 'Great Kingdom' and in the same vein these kingdoms would have also have gods that were 'lesser' or equivalent to God.

[280] Quran, Surah *Fussilat* (41:9)

[281] Quran, Surah *Fussilat* (41:12)

[282] Quran, Surah *al-Ar'af* (7:54)

that will be tested [i.e. sentient beings such as Mankind]. Therefore, the Heavens and the Earth were created in order to create beings that will be tested, meaning that [the words] 'completing' and 'finishing' creation are expressed by the [words] 'Highness' and 'Glory', because as we have explained, this is the focal goal of creation. It is in this manner that the meaning of 'kingdom' and the meaning of 'highness' are achieved by [attempting] to reach the ones for whom [the Heavens and the Earth were created, namely humans]. Furthermore, some of them said [these verses] only refer to humans, because God said; *"God created everything on Earth for you"*[283] and *"God made the day and night in your service"*[284] and *'He has subjected to you whatever is in the Heavens and whatever is on the Earth.*[285] Ibn Abbas stated that humans were created on the seventh day and this is what is meant by 'being completed' and 'being glorious', because God created everything for humans and created them so that they may worship [God]. *Jinn* are included within this [statement] because of the verse *'I did not create the Jinn and Mankind except to worship Me'*[286] but the focus are the humans, because everything that is mentioned is in their service, and everything that is created is to benefit them.[287] *God is the grantor of success.*

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[283] Quran, Surah *al-Baqarah* (2:29)

[284] Quran, Surah *Ibrahim* (14:33)

[285] Quran, Surah *Al-Jathiya* (45:13)

[286] Quran, Surah *Adh-Dhariyat* (51:56)

[287] al-Māturīdī is explaining the concept that *Al-Istiwa ala l-Arsh* refers to being 'completed and 'finished'. Therefore, he gives the transmission from Ibn Abbas that humans were created on the seventh day. Hence, this is what is meant by 'completing', because the focal reason for creation are humans and their creation was completed on the seventh day.

Summary of Al-Māturīdī's Teachings

[Shaykh] Abū Manṣūr said that according to [our position] the central principle about this [issue] is that *"there is nothing is similar to Him."*[288] Therefore [God] has negated any assertion of similarity to Him and we have [already] explained that God's Divinity in His acts and attributes does not have any similitude. Subsequently, we have to accept [the verse] *"The Most Merciful [who] established al-'Arsh 'Istawā"*[289] according to what was [divinely] revealed, but we must deny any likeness or similarity to the creation.[290] [The reason for] this is because God has attributed it to Himself, as it [has been stated] in the Revelation, which is supported by reason, but beyond this we do not give a specific interpretation, because [based on what we have previously] mentioned, the possibility of other interpretations is still present. In addition, there is another possibility; that it could mean something we not know or cannot comprehend, which is [something that bares] no similarity to creation. We believe in what God wanted to state, and this is also applicable to anything [else] that is revealed, such as the visibility of God and other [related] issues. Therefore, we deny any similarity to God, and we believe in what God wanted to state, without specifying one meaning and rejecting other meanings. *God is the grantor of success.*

The central principle concerning this issue is that the understanding of people will be inadequate [to comprehend God], [as people] compare

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[288] Quran, Surah *Ash-Shuraa* (42:11)

[289] Quran, Surah *Taha* (20:5)

[290] Shaykh Abū Manṣūr disagrees with the position of the various other theological Schools and argues that we accept the verse as it was stated by God, with the added caveat of *bilā kayf* (without how), meaning that the verse is accepted but all likeness to the creation is denied. His position became known as the doctrine of *'Tanzīh'*.

what they hear [and see], to what they [have] learnt [and observed] from the creation [that is] around them. We say God's Divinity does not allow for Him to be similar to anything by His acts and by Himself. Because of that, we cannot attribute something to God that we cannot understand[291] [based on] what we know from the creation. In view of [the fact that] we usually compare what we hear from people to the meanings *vis a vis* the created things that we know of; God, on the other hand, is known before hearing the statement which is understood [by the creation], according to the [issues that are known by the] creation. Therefore, this is why it is incorrect to interpret the statement according to what is understood by people. This is because the reason for that statement is the Knowledge [of God] - which is prior to any creation. In terms of all of the meanings that are understood from the words '*Alā*' ('upon'), and ''*Arsh*' ('throne'), and ''*Istawā*', they have many different interpretations that are understood from them. Therefore, it is incorrect to interpret these words with repulsive meanings when we have the most beautiful [meanings], whilst still taking into consideration the possibility of other [possible meanings], as with the descriptions of the rewards and punishments [in the Hereafter]. [It is a similar case with] the *Ĥurūf Muqaṭṭa'āt* and other things in which people should believe, because the test [in terms of] those issues is not to provide certainty.[292] *God knows best.*

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[291] Meaning that we are unable to translate this verse.

[292] We know that there are words and sentences which are contained within scripture for which we do not know the meaning and are unable to comprehend. For example, the *Ĥurūf Muqaṭṭa'āt* (these are isolated letters such as *alif, laam, meem* found at certain places in the Quran). We do not know the meaning for these verses and Māturīdī is stating that it is a test from God, so that we may realise that there are sentences for which we may not achieve a certain meaning. The lesson is for those who want an answer for everything, but for this instance they are unable to get it.

Disputation with Kaʿbī and Against the Notion that God is in the Sky Above Us

Kaʿbī said that it is not permissible to attribute location to God [as He] would be surrounded [by that space]. [This is] because God existed when there was no location, and it is not possible that God would be in need of a location after creating [locations], as God is not subject to change. But then afterwards, [Kaʿbī] said that God is everywhere based on the meaning that He has knowledge of everything and is the maintainer of everything, because they posit that [from a] linguistic [perspective], when one states that they are 'at a house [or] building', it means [that one is performing] the act of building a house.[293]

[Shaykh] Abū Manṣūr stated that [Kaʿbī] is making a factual statement in terms of [God] not being surrounded by space because He existed when there was no location and this [ascription to God] would necessitate a change [in God]. On the other hand, [Kaʿbī's] claim that it necessitates [God being in] need, [solely] based [on the fact that] one of his opponents does not believe in [this position], is an unacceptable reason to disagree with one's opponent. Also, after [making this point] he claims that God was not a Creator, He was not Merciful, He did not speak, and after that, the [creation] came [into existence] after not existing. His claim necessitates change, and further, the change that is attributed to location is less [problematic than Kaʿbī's position]. This is because it is possible that a person can be in one location and then he comes to be in another location, which is considered a change without

[293] Kaʿbī's position is that from a linguistic perspective, stating that God is everywhere is not meant to be taken literally, but instead such an application is metaphorical. Therefore, in this case it means that God has knowledge of everything.

any [material] change [to his essence].[294] An example [of this would be] God finding Himself in another location and [this occurring] in the present Universe without any change happening to Him. Therefore, if Ka'bī rejects the issue related to location, then what he is rejecting is also applicable to the actions of God, because change affecting actions is far greater than [the change that is caused] by location. This is because based on the present Universe, an act does not affect a person without him being affected by some form of change, but it is possible that [a person] will change his location and there will not be any [innate] change to him - as such [we observe that] this happens in the creation without any change. Therefore the change that occurs in the act is a far greater [form of change]. *God is the grantor of success.*

The peculiar thing about Ka'bī's claim is that he states that [God] is everywhere with the meaning of God's being knowledgeable of all [locations]. [The] Knowledgeable is His name, and according to Ka'bī, He by Himself is not everywhere. More than that, Ka'bī [being a *Mutazalite*], does not attribute knowledge to God, by which He can reach [all] locations, even though he is stating [that it is by this attribute that God is present in all locations]. When one considers and contemplates this point, one concludes that this statement contains a clear contradiction. Furthermore, [in one statement] he said that [God] maintains [all] locations but in another [statement] he said that God

[294] Shaykh Abū Manṣūr is not ascribing location to God but instead he is attempting to explain the flaws in the position of Ka'bī. According to Imam Māturīdī, Ka'bī's belief on the Attributes of God results in a material change in the Essence of God. Imam Māturīdī argues that God changing location is problematic, but when one changes location there is allegedly no change to one's essence but instead only a displacement in one's position - and ascribing a change in essence is much worse than ascribing a change in location according to Maturidi.

[innately by His essence] does it Himself.[295] Therefore the maintenance and the act which is attributed to location is nothing other than the location, which would mean that according to this, stating that God is everywhere means that God is [physically] everywhere, which is problematic. Rather, God is knowledgeable about everything before and after it exists. *God is the grantor of success.*

[Shaykh] Abū Manṣūr said that in terms of people that raise their hands towards the sky [to pray], [this action] is a religious ritual that can be set up by God in whichever manner pleases Him. God can make [His creation] face any direction He wants, and if someone thinks that raising one's hands towards the heavens means that God is in the sky, it is the same as to believe that God is beneath the earth when one plants their forehead on the ground during prayer. It is also the same as to say that God is in the East or West by facing those directions during prayer, or thinking God is in Mecca due to [people] going there for pilgrimage, or God is in *Ṣafā* and *Marwah* because when we go [for pilgrimage we] walk towards those two directions as though we are seeking a lost item, or [it is the same as] thinking that God is in the direction of the enemy [when one prays to God during a conflict] - and God's Divinity does not allow for [these types of ascriptions].

Furthermore, there is no one location that is closer to God than [any] other location, and there is no way of knowing how to get to Him. Humans are unable to comprehend reaching [God], and it is not [an

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[295] What Shaykh Abū Manṣūr is arguing is that in one statement Kaʿbī is stating that God maintains the Universe by His attribute (even if Kaʿbī does not call it an attribute), but in another statement he suggests that God maintains the Universe by Himself without any attributes. For example, Kaʿbī argues that the meaning of 'God is everywhere' is that God has knowledge of everything. But 'knowledge' is an attribute of God, and Kaʿbī denies the existence of such attributes, which al-Māturīdī argues is a clear contradiction.

issue] that can be established based on reason. [This is] because God does not need the worship of His creation; it is from this perspective that God has set up religious rituals so that people may offer their thankfulness to Him. Therefore, [God] may establish religious rituals in whichever way pleases Him and it does not imply that God is in one [specific] direction as opposed to another direction, and this [incorrect assumption can only be made by] someone who does not have the correct understanding about God.

The Meaning of the Terms 'Near', 'Coming', 'Going' and 'Sitting' Regarding God

[In the previous chapters] we have explained the statement of [God] being close and that it means God's acceptance [such as in the following verse of the Holy Quran], *"When My servants ask you, [O Muhammad], concerning Me - indeed I am near."*[296] [Also] sometimes the closeness of God means His support, such as [in the following verse of the Holy Quran] *"God is with those who fear Him and those who are doers of good"*[297] and sometimes it can be closeness in terms of state [such as] *"Prostrate and draw near [to God]"*[298], as well as what has been narrated in terms of anyone who comes close to God one hands span He comes close to him one arm's length, up to end of this narration,[299] as well as *"Seek the means [of nearness] to Him."*[300] Also, this [closeness can] mean protection and caring such as *"Your Lord, over all things, is Guardian"*[301] and *"He is the Guardian of all things"*[302] as well as *"Then is He who is a maintainer of every soul, [knowing] what it has earned."*[303] [Also] sometimes it can mean 'knowledge' [such as in the following verse of the Holy Quran] *"He knows your secret and what you make public"*[304]etc. It is in the same way that we understand 'coming',

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296 Quran, Surah *Al-Baqarah* (2:186)

297 Quran, Surah *An-Nahl* (16:128)

298 Quran, Surah *Al-'Alaq* (96:19)

299 This is an *'Âhad Hadith* (single chain or greater narration but not reaching the level of *Mashhūr* (famous) *Mutawātir* (mass transmitted)) that was later found in a number of collections such as '*Sahih Muslim*' (2687). This is an example of one of the few instances where al-Māturīdī used *hadith* to present his point.

300 Quran, Surah *Al-Ma'idah* (5:35)

301 Quran, Surah *Saba* (34:21)

302 Quran, Surah *Al-An'am* (6:102)

303 Quran, Surah *Ar-Ra'd* (13:33)

304 Quran, Surah *Al-An'am* (6:3)

'going' and 'sitting' [*vis-a-vis* God]. Due to [the fact that stating] that a body is coming will entail motion, but [stating that] the truth is coming means the victory of that truth, [such as in the following verse] *"Say, the truth has come"*[305] [It is the same as] falsehood departing means its annihilation, loss or disappearance, [such as in the same verse,] *"falsehood has departed"*[306] But a body 'going' is [normally] its motion, and in a normal conversation this is what is meant by a body and an accident 'coming' and 'going'. God's Divinity does not allow for either of these [ascriptions], and therefore neither of these meanings should be understood in their [literal] ascription to God. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

There is another aspect to this issue, which is that there is no direction or state that is devoid of God's Bounty and grant towards His creation. It is due to this fact that God established specific rituals in each of the directions, and He did the same for [people's] limbs, such as in terms of possession of wealth, because each one of these things has its own way of offering thankfulness to God. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Bear in mind that it is from the sky that we receive revelation, and it is also from the sky that we receive the blessings of the world[307], so that is why we raise our eyes towards that direction. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

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[305] Quran, Surah *Al-Isra* (17:81)

[306] Ibid

[307] Such as rain.

The Vision of God (*Ru'yat Allah*) in Paradise

[Shaykh] Abū Manṣūr said that it is necessary to accept the Beatific Vision [in the Hereafter] without *'idrāk* (comprehension) and *Tafsīr* (interpretation). As for the proof of seeing God [in the Hereafter], then God stated [in the following verse of the Quran] *"Vision perceives Him not, but He perceives [all] vision."*[308] If God could not be seen, then there would be no wisdom in denying *'idrāk*.[309] [This is] because in others [besides God] it is not possible to comprehend [them] without vision. Therefore, the actual thing that God denies [is the ability to] comprehend [God], because something cannot be comprehended (*'idrāk*) without vision, except in the case of God [where *'idrāk* is not possible]. Therefore the [point regarding the denial of vision] does not make sense.[310] *God is the grantor of success.*

The second proof is that Moses said *"Oh my Lord, show me so I can see You"*[311] If God could not be seen then Moses asking to see [God would result in Moses having a] lack of knowledge [and understanding] of God. The one who is unable to recognise God cannot be His Messenger and cannot be the trustee of the message. Furthermore, God did not forbid him [from making this statement], nor did He make him lose hope [in the possibility of such vision]. [For instance] in the case of Noah, he was forbidden over something less [important], and [God] corrected Adam

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308 Quran, Surah *Al-An'am* (6:103)

309 *'Idrāk* means the comprehension of the definite.

310 The *Mutazalites* argue that humans will not see God as it ascribes limits to God, since God is then defined within the parameters of what the eyes can see. Imam Māturīdī argues that the believers will see God in Paradise without modality, because God cannot be seen by created qualities.

311 Quran, Surah *Al-A'raf* (7:143)

and the other Prophets [if the need arose]. [In this case] if [the vision of God in the Hereafter] was [something that is] impossible then [this issue] would reach the level of *Kufr* (disbelief). [This is] because after that God said: *"If the mountain remains in its place, then you will see Me."*[312] If someone were to posit that it is possible that Moses asked [God] to show him a sign to know that it is from God, we [respond by] stating that this is impossible because of the following reasons; God said *'you will not see me'*[313] and then God showed him the sign.[314] In addition, [Moses] asking for proof would be a form of stubbornness, because God has already shown him [many] proofs and signs, and this level of stubbornness is the behaviour of the disbelievers. This is because the [disbelievers] will continue to ask for evidence even when they have been provided with sufficient proof, and therefore this [type of stubbornness] would be considered of the same ilk.

The [third] proof is that God said [in the following verse of the Holy Quran] *"if the mountain remains in its place then you will see Me."*[315] Therefore the proof by which the mountain will remain in its place is weaker than the proof that the mountain will not remain in its place.[316] It is because

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[312] *Ibid*

[313] *Ibid*

[314] In terms of what is relayed in the Quran, Moses asked God *"Oh my Lord show me, so I can see You,"* to which God responded *"You will not see Me, but look at the mountain; if it should remain in place, then you will see Me",* but the mountain disintegrated and Moses fell unconscious. So according to al-Māturīdī, the sign from God was that Moses would not see God in this world.

[315] Ibid

[316] What Al-Māturīdī most likely means by this is that if the mountain had remained in its place, then this means that there had been no response by God to the question of Moses. Since the mountain did disintegrate, it means that there was a strong response from God, rather than ignoring the question. This is not al-Māturīdī's strongest proof, as there is no seeming correlation between God responding to the question of Moses and the possibility of seeing God.

of this reason that we say that Moses did not ask for a sign [from God], but instead, he was asking for himself [so that he can see God]. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Furthermore, [is the instance of] Abraham arguing with his tribe about the stars being God. Abraham's criticism that the stars are not God is because they set and disappear. He did not expostulate [with his tribe] about the vision and non-vision of God, but instead, he said that he does not love something that disappears and sets because this proves that it is temporal. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

In addition, God said [in the following Quranic verse] *"The faces that day will be radiant, looking to their Lord"*[317] and this verse cannot refer to waiting[318], because of the following reasons: The first is that the Day of Judgement is not a time of waiting, but that time [of waiting] is in this world. That day and place [i.e. the Day of Judgement] is the place of existence and occurrence except at the time when everyone will become scared [about the forthcoming Final Judgement]. Some of them also said that this verse is about [them] seeing themselves [affected] by something they have been expecting. The second is [that the verse] *"The faces that day will be radiant"*[319] is [using] the word 'occurring'. The third is *"looking at their Lord"*[320] - the word *''ilā'* is used for looking at something and is not used for waiting for something. The fourth is that this verse is giving

[317] Quran, Surah *Al-Qiyamah* (75:22-23)

[318] The *Mutazalites* argue against the possibility of seeing God in the Hereafter. They base their doctrine on the verse that refers to the fact that no vision can perceive God, but God perceives all vision. On this basis, they interpret the verse which refers to seeing God as denoting the meaning of 'waiting'. Hence, in this section Imam Māturīdī is attempting to present flaws in this position.

[319] Quran, Surah *Al-Qiyamah* (75:22)

[320] Quran, Surah *Al-Qiyamah* (75:23)

them the good news about the bounty they have gained, and waiting for something is not called 'rewarding'.

Furthermore, not using its obvious and explicit meaning would necessitate that they are imposing their words onto God. This is why it stands established that [we] will see God but by denying any definition of similarity or likeness of God [to the creation]. It is the same as [in the instance of] Speech, Acting and the rest of the attributes of God,[321] for in the cases of the attributes such as Speech, Acting and Power, it is necessary to accept the attributes of God while denying all similarity between [God] and others. Anyone who claims that God cannot grant [someone the ability to] see Him and denies the vision [of God] because [it implies] similarity to seeing created things based [on the principles regarding the] usage of the verse *"The Most Merciful [who] established al-'Arsh 'Istawā"*[322] as well as other verses, we should not reject their [position] based on these types of verses [and the implied literal meaning] of [God's] likeness to the creation, but instead we [should posit] that we accept the [verses] whilst rejecting similarity to the creation, and it is the same case regarding the verses about the vision of God. *God is the grantor of success.*

Moreover, [God states in the following verse of the Holy Quran], *"For those who have done good is the best [reward] and extra."*[323] In some *'Âhad*[324]

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[321] For example, the attributes of Speech, Acting, Power and Will. It is necessary to attribute all of these to God but with the added caveat of denying any type of likeness between Him and His creation.

[322] Quran, Surah *Taha* (20:5)

[323] Quran, Surah *Yunus* (10:26)

[324] The linguistic meaning of *'Âhad* is 'ones'. It is a transmission by narrators where the number of these narrators does not reach the level of *mutawātir* or *mashhūr* ('mass transmitted' or 'famous' respectively). There is no specification as to the number of

narrations it is reported that [this extra that is referred to in the verse] means seeing God,[325] but again, it is possible that [the extra] could be referring to something else. Nonetheless, because the [issue of] seeing God became very well-known, so this is why it is not accurate to deny the explicit meaning [of the narration]. If it would not have been spread widely, then we also would have rejected this narration. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Furthermore, it was narrated that the Prophet said: *'You will see your Lord on the Day of Judgement as you see the moon, and you will not get hurt from the vision.'* He was also asked *"Did you see God?"* to which he replied, *'By my heart.'* Hence, some of them argued that the Prophet did not reject the [validity of the] question of this person, and the person asking [the question] understood that seeing through the vision of the heart is [seeing] through knowledge. He understood that the [Prophet] knew God and he did not ask about that. Bearing in mind that God has forbidden Muslims to ask about something that has been previously banned, [such as] in the following verse *"Oh you who have believed, do not ask about things"*,[326] so how is it possible that someone can ask about an issue that is considered *Kufr* (disbelief) according to some of the scholars, and [yet] the Prophet does not forbid him from [asking such a question], nor does he fault him but [instead] responds softly and gives the impression that it is not impossible. *God is the grantor of success.*

Moreover, God has promised that He will reward [His creation in the Hereafter] by giving them something that is much better than [their actions] in this world, and there is nothing better than believing in the

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narrators. *'Âhad* narrations give the *hadith* an equal possibility of being either authentic or inauthentic.

[325] Meaning that this extra is referring to the reward of seeing God.

[326] Quran, Surah *Al-Ma'idah* (5:101).

Oneness of God. [This is] because believing in God is considered a good [act] based on reason, and the reward in Paradise correlates with the actions [of the person in this world]. The beauty that is known by nature [such as desires of man] is less than the good [reward that has been promised in Paradise]. This is because all of it [namely the good in this world and Paradise] is considered good by [Man's] desire/nature because we desire [a good reward], but our practices [in this world] in terms of believing in God are not [something] desired by [Man's] nature/desire but instead [that desire is based on] reason. Something that is considered good based on reason is superior to the thing that is considered good based on one's nature/desire. [The reason for this is that] when something is considered good according to reason, then it is not possible that a person who uses reason does not confirm it to be good, but it is possible that when someone desires something based on his nature, there are others who do not desire it based on their [own] nature, and therefore one's natural inclination is based on varying perspectives. [It is the] same [case] for punishments [from God]. Therefore, the possibility of the vision of God becomes necessary as a grant [from God], which will correlate with their good actions. This is being able to see that which they worshipped without seeing. It is similar to being promised a reward and then [this reward] presenting itself to them on the Day of Judgement. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

In addition, in the Hereafter, everyone will gain knowledge about God [and] the knowledge will be such that it never ceases. This type of knowledge can only be gained by vision and not based on [speculative] reasoning. A large number of proofs and signs does not provide indisputable knowledge about this [issue], and this is signified in [the

Holy Quran, in the following verse];[327] *"Even if We had sent down to them the angels [with the message], and the dead spoke to them [of it] and We gathered together every [created] thing in front of them, they would not believe."*[328],[329] Also, God mentioned that these disbelievers continue to reject the Day of Judgement and deny the Prophets, but then on the Day of Judgement they will remonstrate [with God] that they have only spent *'but an hour of the day,'*[330] and [there are] other [similar] verses [that present this point]. Thus, if the knowledge that is gained by seeing cannot be equivalent to the knowledge gained by reason, then the reverse is also applicable, [which is] that the certainty that is gained by reason cannot reach the level of the certainty that is gained by seeing, and therefore this makes [the issue] of vision necessary. For both, the believers and disbelievers are on equal [footing] in terms of the knowledge that is gained by reason, but the virtuous news about the vision [of God] is only for the believer. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

[Shaykh] Abū Manŝūr said that we do not believe that *'idrāk* is possible because God said *"eyes do not do 'idrāk"*[331] So God praised himself by saying that *'idrāk* is not possible but [God did not say that] He is

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[327] Shaykh Abū Manŝūr only included the first part of the verse in his text, but I have included a greater portion of the verse as I felt it would provide a better understanding of the point that has been made.

[328] Quran, Surah *Al-An'am* (6:111)

[329] Al-Māturīdī is making the point that even if they had been provided with and had seen numerous proofs, they would continue to disbelieve. It is explained in the Māturīdī School that although proofs that are gained by speculative reasoning can provide certainty, when one observes the actual existence of something, this provides additional satisfaction. Māturīdī calls it *'Ŧama'nīnah'*. An example is when you lock your door; you are certain you locked it, but to double check you will twist the handle to confirm it. This additional confirmation is called *'Ŧama'nīnah'*.

[330] Quran, Surah *Yunus* (10:45)

[331] Quran, Surah *Al-An'am* (6:103)

invisible. It is the same as [what is mentioned in the following verse of the Holy Quran;] *"no one can comprehend/surround (completely know) Him".*[332] This verse states that knowledge about [God] is necessary, but it denies the [possibility] of having complete knowledge of [God]. It is similar [to the issue of] *'idrāk. God is the grantor of success.*

'Idrāk means the comprehension of the definite. God's Divinity does not allow for Him to be described with definiteness because that would entail limitation and confinement.[333] He is free from all these ascriptions, and He is unique in His Essence, whereas definiteness is a description of an object whose parts are amalgamated until they become evanescent. In addition, it is not possible to apply any definition to God, because God existed [when] there was no definition, and God is as He was before and there was no change [in God]. Everything has its definition by way of which that thing is known - such as flavour, colour, taste, smell and the other aspects of the definite specifics of things, as God made each thing known and comprehended through that specific aspect, and [this is also the case for] the faculties of reason and accidents.[334] Therefore, God has informed us that He is not any kind of these definite aspects of things through which we may know Him, which is to be applied to [the] vision [of God] as well as Knowledge of Him. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Furthermore, there are several aspects to the issue of the Beatific Vision/Vision of God, the reality of all of which cannot be known except through the knowledge of a particular aspect of it. Therefore, if vision is expressed in terms of sight, it is to be accepted in this way. If

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[332] Quran, Surah *Taha* (20:110)

[333] God cannot be described using limits and parameters because that would necessitate that He is less than these, or that they are more than Him.

[334] Meaning substances and accidents.

there is something whose aspect cannot be known except through the mentioning of sight, then further investigation into its essence and reality should be avoided, but *'idrāk* means 'the comprehension of the definite'. [For example in the case of a] shadow, in reality it is visible but in relation to the sun it has no definite aspect or otherwise [the shadow] would also be visible up until the time of the sunset, but instead the definite aspect [of the shadow] can only be known by vision through the specific aspect that limits it.[335] Also [in the case of] daylight it can be seen, but its definite aspects are not just ,known by itself; or in the case of darkness, where it cannot be seen and nor can one comprehend its definiteness, and therefore *'idrāk* is not possible for it and nor can one comprehend its definiteness. As such, each thing [has been made] to be known and comprehended through a specific aspect,[336] even if in itself it can be seen without definition. The example of the Moon was presented because its definiteness and size are not known, but it can be seen based on certainty. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

[Shaykh] Abū Manŝūr said that the foundational principle related to [the Beatific Vision] is that we only accept that which has been confirmed in scripture, while denying all meanings and descriptions that imply similarity [with the creation] and nor we do attempt to interpret it, because interpretation is not Revelation. *God is the grantor of success.*

In addition, Kaʿbī has made an attempt to prove that *Ruʾyah* (vision) and *'idrāk* are synonymous, but we have already explained [the fallacy of this

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[335] Māturīdī is arguing that vision differs depending on the circumstance, object or person. The example he provides is that the conditions of seeing shadows, darkness and daylight are not the same as solid objects, in terms of the fact that a person cannot deduce their definiteness with the eye. Therefore, imposing your essence on all other creations, never mind God, is flawed.

[336] Meaning that *'idrāk* will be applicable to it.

proposition].[337] He then continued that knowledge about something which is absent cannot be different from the ways of knowing [other things, such as those which are present].[338] Therefore it is the same case for our vision; we will see [in the Hereafter] in the manner that we see [in this world]. Also [another example of vision differing depending on circumstance is viewing something] from different distances, when [an object] is close [it is large, and when the same object is] far it is small, [, but the relationship in terms of vision between the two is still the same]. If [one argues that] it is possible to see without the conditions [of vision] then it is [the same as proposing that it is] possible to know without the conditions of knowing.

Shaykh Abū Manṣūr said that his position contains several errors. [Kaʿbī] has compared the vision of God to the vision of [Kaʿbī's] own essence. It is known that there are many [creatures] that differ from one another [in their essence]. Their modes of vision differ from Kaʿbī's mode of vision, which allows them to see things that he is unable to see (and this is not referring to comprehending something's definiteness using vision), such as [in the case of] Angels, *Jinn* and other types of creation, who are able to see by [the use of] modes of vision that differ from a human's mode of vision, which allows them to see things we cannot [see]. It is the same case for small creatures such as mosquitos, flies and lice which can be seen and they use a different mode of vision. If we were to propose that the only acceptable mode of vision is that

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[337] The *Mutazalites* argue that *Ruʾyah* (vision) and *ʾidrāk* are synonymous, which means when you see God this applies definite aspects to God. Māturīdī argues that they are not synonymous but instead *ʾidrāk* means to comprehend, and God has denied the ascription of *ʾidrāk* to Himself.

[338] He is saying that regardless of whether absent or in front of us, we know both things in the same way, therefore our knowledge about absent or present things is similar.

which is [used by people], then it would mean that no creature [other than humans] has vision.[339]

Furthermore, [there are other examples] such as those Angels who are responsible for recording our deeds and listening to our speech. If we were to compare their condition to our own, then we have to refuse and reject all of that –[340] which is a significant proposition.

Further examples can be seen by [what is mentioned in the Quran] such as the skin [of people as well as their] limbs and other types of creation speaking [in the Hereafter].[341] If we were to analyse [this verse] and compare it to our observation of the present Universe, then it would be very challenging to accept. Furthermore, vision differs in terms of seeing and definiteness. As such, if one were to compare one mode of vision to another, one would reject [the mode of vision that differs]. If [the points] we have presented are correct, then Kaʿbī's proposition is flawed. *God is the grantor of success.*

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[339] Al-Māturīdī is attempting to explain how modes of vision differ amongst the various types of creation, so for example in the seen world, we know that the mode of vision of humans differs from animals, such as in the case of a bat, who in order to navigate, use echoes of self-produced sounds which bounce of objects. In the case of the unseen world, we know that Angels and *Jinn* use modes of vision that cannot be comprehended by humans. For example, in Sunni theology, angels are able to observe and record deeds of humans, in a way that a person is unable to understand. If the modes of vision differ so significantly in relation to the creation, then applying your own mode of vision to God is completely flawed, especially when you are not able to apply your own mode of vision to something that has been created, such as in the case angels and *Jinn*.

[340] This is another example of where M-dash is used; it is to explain to the reader that this statement was made in the middle of the paragraph. I have refrained from pointing out all instances of this occurrence, but by referring to it a second time it will be demonstrate that this occurs on many occasions throughout the text.

[341] There are many examples of this in the Quran, such as the following verse, *"That Day, We will seal over their mouths, and their hands will speak to Us, and their feet will testify about what they used to earn."* (Quran, Surah *Ya'sin* (36:65))

Moreover, based on our observation of the conditions [of the present Universe], this allows us to understand what we know based on things being bodies and accidents. But then Scripture was revealed that informed us about the unseen, whose conditions differ from [the conditions of this Universe that are based on them being] bodies and accidents. The issue of vision bears similarity to this point. *God Knows Best.*

The next issue is what we have mentioned in terms of the [vision and definiteness of] a shadow, darkness and light. It does not meet any of the conditions [of vision that is applied to people]. [The next point] is that it is possible that all the conditions [that allow one to see] are present, but one is still not able to see due to certain obstructions, or it is a specific [attribute] of the body [that it does not see]. If that is the case, then the conditions that allow one to see are present, even if there is no vision. However, if there is an obstruction [to the vision], then precision [of sight] can be attained by the [unobstructed] vision of others. This is because [the person] was unable to see due to an impediment, and if this obstruction is removed [by relying on the sight of others], then it becomes possible [to have an awareness of that which should have been seen without the obstruction]. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God*

In addition, [the position of] Kaʿbī [only focuses] on the vision that is related to bodies, and he did not test to compare his vision with [those things] that are other than bodies and accidents [to decipher] how vision can reach them.[342]

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[342] The *Mutazalites* using the analogy of the present for the absent is flawed, because our knowledge in this world in limited to bodies and accidents, and we do not have knowledge of the absent. Furthermore, God is neither a body nor an accident.

Furthermore, everyone can see, even if there is an obstruction to the accuracy [of their vision] or [due to] distance [of the seen thing], as it is possible to dispel [the obstruction] by relying on the vision of others. [For instance], the Angel of Death can see that which is at the end of the Earth, as well as the middle of it, which [is something] that cannot be comprehended based on human sight. This signifies that what [Ka'bī] considered is not the reason for the definiteness of what is seen, but instead, it is the cause for the definiteness of what obstructs vision, and if this [obstruction] is dispelled, one can see. The denial of vision is based on something which in its essence is anomalous, or otherwise, everyone could see. Therefore, if one denies the Beatific Vision because [God] is not a body or cannot be seen [with definition], then it is necessary to confirm [this statement when accepting the scripture], because [in this world] anything that is not seen is due to an anomaly or otherwise all corporeal bodies can be seen. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

[Al-Ka'bī] objected to not applying the situation of this world [to the absent] but this is not possible, because by [equating this world which includes bodies and accidents], it removes the reason for the obligation of this world, such as [that] it is a test.

In terms of the issue related to Moses, [Ka'bī] mentioned [where Moses asked God] to show him a sign to know that it is from God, but we have already explained the flaws [in this position]; that the one who is unable to recognise God cannot be the trustee of His message whose purpose it is to help with the salvation of creation, as his mission entails transmitting the message and advocating worship [of God], which [in itself] is a test. In fact, the reason why [Moses] asked to see God was so that his rank would be increased and he would know his great standing

with God, or God commanded that people could be taught about the possibility of [Beatific Vision].[343] *God is the grantor of success.*

Then [Ka'bī] inferred that [Moses] did not see [God] but instead saw the mountain, and [seeing] the mountain is not a reasonable way for [Moses] to know and see [God]. It is said to Ka'bī that if [this event] was [for God to present] a sign, then the mountain did not see or understand [the sign].[344] If it is [a sign], then the sign is the firmness of the mountain not that [God] will show [Moses] the sign and then for [the mountain] to crumble [This point includes the proposition of Ka'bī] which entails Moses seeing the sign, which is the mountain crumbling, and then God stating in [the verse of the Holy Quran]; *'you will not see Me'*[345]and Ka'bī attributed [this verse] as the sign which [Moses] saw. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Then Ka'bī asked about the meaning of Moses' repentance[346], [despite] not being asked about it. Ka'bī claimed that [repentance is] of two types. The first is that Moses is aware of the evidence that it is a minor sin and he therefore repented. The second is the customary usage without the

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[343] There is a disagreement amongst theologians on whether it is possible to see God in this world. The majority of theologians hold the view that it is possible to see God in this world, because there is no essential difference between this world and the Hereafter. A minority of theologians, which include the *Mutazalites,* argue that it is not possible to see God in this world and nor is it possible in the Hereafter. For example Zamakhsharī argued that when God stated *'You will not see me'*, it applies eternally, which means that you will never see God and this includes the Hereafter.

[344] Māturīdī is making the point that if seeing God automatically means that it is a sign, then in the same verse, God appeared to the mountain and yet the mountain is unable to see or understand.

[345] Quran, Surah *Al-A'raf* (7:143)

[346] In the same verse in Surah *Al-Araf*, the literal text states that Moses repented.

occurrence of sin, such as when people renew their repentance at the time of being in plight.

Shaykh Abū Manŝūr responded that if it were a minor sin, then it begins by [the minor sin] being known by evidence, and it is imperative Moses was warned [of this minor sin] except for when he is in an unconsciousness state and not [being warned] when one is in a state of unconsciousness. The second [explanation] is acceptable for when one is in a state of shock and not when one is in a state of rest, or [when one] returns to safety and consciousness, and the correct [usage is for example] the time when [Moses] saw his staff, turned and fled. *God is the grantor of success.*

However, it is conceivable that since [God] said *'you will not see Me'*[347] then it means that it was possible for Moses to see God in this world[348], and that as promised by God, one is capable of [of seeing] Him in the Hereafter. He went back on what [he thought] and [literally accepted the verse] where God stated *'you will not see Me,'*[349] even if [this position] became a part of the foundation of his belief, such as the case with believers, whose belief is enacted through each sign that is revealed and every duty that is renewed, despite the fact that on the whole, they were believers. *God is the grantor of success.*

We have already explained [the issue related to] what God said [in the following verse of the Holy Quran;] *"The faces that day will be radiant, looking at their Lord."*[350]

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[347] Quran, Surah *Al-A'raf* (7:143)

[348] What al-Māturīdī is arguing is that God said; 'you will not see Me' and not 'you cannot see me', which he claims means that the possibility of seeing God in this world remains.

[349] *Ibid*

[350] Quran, Surah *Al-Qiyamah* (75:22-23)

[Shaykh Abū Manṣūr] said that the central principle of the argument [pertaining to the Beatific Vision] is that it is either a well-known issue [in reference to the essence] or it is linked to an intention which would [be an explanation] that does not refer to the [explicit meaning] such as in the following verses [in the Holy Quran]; *'Have you not turned your vision to your Lord - how He extends the shadow'*[351] and *'Have you not seen how your Lord dealt with.'*[352] The main basis of [the argument] is that when one says 'You have seen such-and-such' or 'You have looked at such-and-such', it is specifically referring to his essence, but instead when one says 'You have seen him say such-and-such and do such-and-such', one is not referring to his essence, and it is the same case for Moses in relation to this verse.

Therefore, in principle, the one who contemplates [the position of Kaʿbī] knows that he is anthropomorphist [as he is comparing God to the creation], [which can be seen by the fact that] he has not mentioned that quality the vision must possess under these conditions, but instead he argues that he came into existence this [way], which is the position of an anthropomorphist - that every person who acts and is knowledgeable came into existence in the present Universe as a body, and therefore it must be the same in the unseen. Then he mentioned the meaning of the vision of a body, but he failed to mention the quality of the vision of other than a body, so that he could [provide an adequate] proof [for his position].[353]

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[351] Quran, Surah *al-Furqan* (25:45)

[352] Quran, Surah *al-Fil* (105:1)

[353] What al-Māturīdī is attempting to argue is that the position of Kaʿbī entails a degree of anthropomorphism, in that Kaʿbī is comparing seeing created things to seeing God. He argues that Kaʿbī is unable to fathom the possibility that the Beatific Vision bears no similarity to creation. Al-Māturīdī posits that Kaʿbī's view means that the principles of the seen world should be applied to the unseen world and therefore also to God.

Furthermore, Ka'bī denied the Beatific Vision in its accuracy or [due to] distance as both cannot 'leave' God. Then he argued that God praised Himself [in the following verse of the Quran]; *Vision perceives Him not, but He perceives [all] vision,'*[354] and it is not possible for something to 'leave' God, and the same is applied to the [following verse]; *'He has power over all things'*[355], and therefore it is not possible [for this power] to 'leave' [God]. [But the problem with this position is that] God was described by vision in a manner that invalidates [Ka'bī's contention], which signifies that his approach does not express the true nature of vision.

Furthermore, if one posits the question that 'How is [God] seen?', we answer 'without 'how'", because 'how' is used for something which is a body, but instead [God] is seen without the description of standing and sitting, leaning or hanging, amalgamating and separating, advancing or retreating, short or tall, lightness or darkness, at rest or in motion, touching or not touching, outside or inside. And it is not possible to ascribe a shape to Him or for reason to comprehend Him, because He is beyond [such ascriptions].

The likely reason for this paragraph is the *Mutazalites* arguing in turn that al-Māturīdī's belief entails anthropomorphism, in that only bodies and accidents are apprehended by vision. His response was an attempt to show that rather Ka'bī's position was the one that resulted in anthropomorphism.

354 Quran, Surah *Al-An'am* (6:103)

355 Quran, Surah *Hud* (11:4)

Dispute with Muslim Opponents

Against the *Mutazalites*: Proof That Their Main Teachings are Close to the Ideas of Foreign Religions

[Shaykh] Abū Manŝūr said that we will explore what causes a rational person to [adopt] [the position of] the *Mutazalite* School, which in its principles and analogies [is similar] to the various other [non-Islamic] religions, and if one were to contemplate, one would realise that the doctrines [of the *Mutazalites*] are as a result of the doctrines [of other religions].

Against the Thesis: That Which is Non-Existent (*Ma'dum*) has Always Existed.

The *Mutazalites* said that a non-existent [thing] is [nonetheless] a thing and the somethingness of things is [not applied to] God, and it is God who brings [the thing] from non-existence into existence.[356]

[Shaykh] Abū Manŝūr said that in reality what they say is that things are pre-eternal but non-existent, and later come into existence. As such, arguing for their [form of] pre-eternity is the denial of monotheism. [According to the *Mutazalites*] things are non-existent and become different [in existence] only in their emergence, and appearance [in the present Universe], and [such] things are pre-eternally non-existent things. In this way, they associated the pre-eternity of God with other than Him which is tantamount to a denial of monotheism.[357]

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[356] In this chapter al-Māturīdī returns to the topic of whether a non-existent thing is a thing. As he relayed previously, as well as in the forthcoming chapters, he argues that a non-existing thing is not a thing, due to the fact that it does not exist, whereas the *Mutazalites* argues that non-existent things are still a type of a thing i.e. they have a type of existence – for example in the 'knowledge' of God.

[357] When Muslims such as the *Mutazalites* argue for the pre-eternity of the Universe they do not equate the pre-eternity of the Universe with God's necessary pre-eternity. This important distinction is the reason why they are not partnering the creation with God. This distinction is not accepted by Al-Māturīdī and more famously in later times by al-Ghazali who believed that the *Mutazalites* and Avicenna are equivocating the pre-eternity of God with the pre-eternity of creation.

Against the Thesis: God has not Eternally been the Creator

Therefore, the *Mutazalites* claimed that the Universe is pre-eternal, as 'things' are other than God, and that all things [before creation] other than God had the property of 'non-existence' but [nonetheless] did not cease [in their somethingness]. This controverts [the position] of all monotheists who hold that God created *Ex Nihilo*. *Mutazalites* assert that [God] is the Creator in the sense of bringing something into existence, while [stating that] there are things before creation. *God is the grantor of success.*

The argument of the *Dahrīya* (Materialists), who maintain that there is a Creator [and] argue that God is continuously making things so that they exist pre-eternally[358], is closer [to the truth] than the teaching of the [*Mutazalites*]. Another belief the [*Dahrīya*] hold that conforms with the view of the *Mutazalites* is their view that the Prime Matter of the Universe is eternal, which is also the belief of those that propagate the notion of *Hayūla* [raw, Primal Matter], which is that accidents emerged [from the *Hayūla*], and the Universe is the result of these [accidents]. In addition, [*Mutazalites*] also attribute to things a 'somethingness' that is originated and then they come into existence. This position entails the notion that God was not the Creator or originator [of the Universe] and nor were things non-existent and then they came into existence. According to them, the *Dhāt* (the Essence of God) existed and was inactive, and God

[358] Their position is that God is the Creator and thus He is continuously creating as per His pre-eternal Attribute. Their view is occasionalism whilst still holding onto the view that the Universe is pre-eternal.

then produced the creation, or He was not the Creator and then came into existence as a Creator.[359] *God is the grantor of success.*

According to them, the *Dhāt* (the Essence of God) existed, and there was no Universe, and then nothing occurred except that the Universe came into existence, without [God directly] causing the [Universe] to come into existence and without any quality going from [God] to the [Universe] through which it existed. This is because for the *Mutazalites*, God's Will [of creating] and the Knowledge [of creating] are the same thing, because the creation and the Universe has no meaning for [God] for it to be as it is. They then used [the temporal nature of the Universe] as evidence for the basis of their argument for the proof [of the existence of God]. Therefore, they fabricated their position by using this as a proof because according to their view, nothing came from God [to cause the creation of the Universe], other than Him knowing of its existence after it came from non-existence [into existence]. They believe that the knowledge that a thing exists is not [the same as] creating it, and [positing that it is] pre-eternal does not require that it exists because of God.[360] Therefore, they made it necessary that the Universe is not through [it being brought into existence] by one [entity], and this was on the basis [of imitating] those who claimed the pre-eternity of the Universe since

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[359] One of the reasons for *Mutazilites* arguing against those who believe in *Creatio ex Nihilo* is the notion of the latter that God existed but was inactive and then after some time brought the Universe into existence by becoming active. Hence, they argue for a pre-eternal Universe. Māturīdī must know this but he repeatedly avoids mentioning it or addressing it *vis a vis* his own beliefs.

[360] The *Mutazalites* do not hold the position that the Universe does not exist due to God ontologically. Instead this is a positon held by some Greek philosophers. Although, in this paragraph, Al-Māturīdī is arguing that if you hold the view that the Universe is pre-eternal, it is not necessary that such a model requires the existence of a creator – although even the Greek Neo-Platonists showed long before Māturīdī how an eternal Universe still requires a Creator.

it was not through another [way of being brought into existence]. Therefore, their position is a mere imitation of the claim of these other [groups], except that these other [groups formed their opinion] by using analogy, since the [existence of the] Universe was not due to another [non-interlinked cause and therefore] their belief was that [the Universe was] pre-eternal without beginning, while arguing that the Universe came into existence without another being [causing it] - as we have explained [previously]. What is even more perplexing is that [the *Mutazalites*] made the Universe the creator and [God] a created being, so [that] the Universe becoming so was not because it was designed by another [being such as God]. In that case, [God] applied to himself a name [that does not] befit [Him] and applied to the Universe an exalted name, and it would be excusable if the name 'knower'[361] were transposed to the Universe, but this is an example of an erroneous conclusion [made by the *Mutazalites*].[362]

In addition, [another example] of [the *Mutazalites*] imitating [these other groups] is the Dualists' position that things were non-existent and then came into existence without there being a bringing-into-existence other than their emergence from non-existence. The Dualists argued that Light and Darkness were separate and then they mixed; therefore this Universe [previously] existed without [the aforementioned] separation or mixing with something else, and as such, this Universe came into

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[361] Which is what the *Mutazalites* apply to God instead of 'the Creator'.

[362] Al-Māturīdī is relaying the supposed position of the *Mutazalites* and arguing that certain premises they hold result in erroneous conclusions. Here al-Māturīdī is using the doctrine of the *Mutazalites* that God did not directly cause the Universe to come into existence from non-existence, and that God does not enact His Will to create the Universe, but instead He has knowledge of creation. Therefore, for the *Mutazalites* 'will' and 'knowledge' are synonyms. This means that if God did not directly cause the creation of the Universe and it was also not because of another, then the Universe must be pre-eternal.

existence by itself after there previously not being a Universe and this is as we have mentioned, the doctrine of the *Mutazalites.*[363] *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

The *Mutazalites,* as well as others, drew *'Istadlāl* (inference) from the created nature of the Universe [that it necessarily is a created object], and their proof of this was nothing but the fact that the Universe exists. Their [belief] required the created nature [of the Universe], and on this basis, they argued for a Creator. But then the *Mutazalites* also posited in terms of God that He was not a creator, merciful or compassionate and God remains so [unchanging and in the same state].[364] Therefore, they made God in His initial state, through which knowledge of God's [existence] that occurred to the creation was not free from [being affected by accidents], such as in the case of the Universe, which they found based on their senses is [also not free from] accidents. Therefore [according to this logic], the [same] reason they know of the created nature of the Universe is [the same reason] by which they should assert a created nature for the creator (and Merciful God, is eternal and perpetual).[365]

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[363] Al-Māturīdī is equivocating the position of the Dualists with that of the *Mutazalites* from the perspective that the *Mutazalites* argue that God did not bring the Universe into existence within time, due to their idea of a pre-eternal Universe, and the Dualists also argue that the Universe came into existence as a result of the conflict between Light and Darkness, and not because an external being brought it into existence.

[364] The basis of this argument is the *Mutazalites* denial of the Attributes of God. This is because they argue that this would mean that God then would have parts, with one part being Knowledge, the other Speech, another Essence etc. Here al-Māturīdī is giving a counter as to why this is a flawed position.

[365] Al-Māturīdī is attempting to argue that the *Mutazalites* hold the view that we know the existence of the Creator based on the created nature of the Universe. But then, al-Māturīdī claims that the *Mutazalites* don't believe that God was a creator. They also hold that God doesn't have the attribute of knowledge, because they argue that the attributes give the implication that they are separate from God and as a result they are accidents. But then the *Mutazalites* argue that God has knowledge of the Universe, and

Furthermore, in regards to the above, there are two issues. The first is that it is necessary to state that the entire Universe is originated, even though we did not observe [its origination], [this understanding] is based on the fact that we have observed [from the Universe and the objects therein] that it is not free from [being created and] created things, which signifies that it requires a Creator and Designer, and our existence is [an example of that] which is called a created thing. The second is that God's Essence must be eternal, since if His existence is only known by accidents [as the *Mutazalites* claim], why is it not necessary to claim the eternity of the entire Universe, if it is not free of accidents?[366]

In addition, there is knowledge about the comportment of accidents in the non-sensory Universe through their amalgamation and separation, motion and rest etc. According to [the *Mutazilites'*] position, mercy, designing and restoring creation are properties that are added to God, and they posit that they are all accidents. Therefore, it must be argued that what is required for the Universe, and whoever has this description, is a Creator and Designer outside of it. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

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knowledge is an accident, so therefore their position means that not only do we know God because of the created nature of the Universe, but we also know through God His own created nature.

[366] Al-Māturīdī also holds the position that God is known by accidents, therefore in this paragraph he is most likely making a similar point as he made in the previous paragraph, which is that if God's 'accidental' (according to the *Mutazalites*) attribute of creating created the Universe, then it means God is attached to accidents, as is the Universe. Therefore, both of their accidental natures result in the eternity of both of them, or that the both of them are originated.

Against the Thesis: God's Act of Creation is not Different from that Which is Created, God's Will is not other than that Which is Willed

The *Mutazalites* argue that there was God, and then a 'will' emerged from Him through which the Universe came into existence, without God creating this will and without this will having any free choice, since there was nothing except for God's Essence, which existed [pre-eternally].

Furthermore, the *Magians*[367] argued that God existed, and an ignoble thought emerged from Him and from this [thought] sprung Satan, and [Satan] is that through which all evil came into existence, which the *Magians* call a 'thought', while the *Mutazilites* call it 'will' and 'free choice'. But the origination [of this evil according to the relayed position] was not because of 'free choice' or 'will' because it is closer [to the notion of it being] a thought. Then [according to the *Magians* this 'thought'] was not [anything] other than evil, and [in the same vein] 'will' according to the *Mutazalites* was not from other than the Universe, [meaning that it is not from God][368], so this (and God knows best) is what is meant by the

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[367] The Magians are supposedly the followers of Zoroastrianism. They have been mentioned by various traditions through history and they are mentioned in the Quran in the following verse: *"Indeed, those who have believed and those who were Jews and the Sabeans and the Christians and the Magians and those who associated with Allah - Allah will judge between them on the Day of Resurrection. Indeed Allah is, over all things, Witness."* (Quran, Surah *al-Hajj* (22:17))

[368] Al-Māturīdī is referring to his dispute with the *Mutazalites* regarding good and evil. Al-Māturīdī argues that both good and evil are from God but out of respect one does not ascribe evil to God. The *Mutazalites* argue that God is good, and therefore only good comes from Him. According to them evil is the by-product of human will or free choice. Those who dispute with them argue this entails that people are the creators of evil which is a result of choice. The *Mutazalites* on the other hand argue that this choice was created by God, but evil is a result of a person's free will.

following Prophetic statement 'The *Qadariya*[369] are the *Magians* of this nation.'[370]

[369] Some people believe that there was a theological group that were known as the *'Qadariya'*. Most likely this is not the case and instead it was used as derogatory term for those who believed that people had complete autonomy over their actions. The issue of the various opinions on Free Will is explained in footnote 379

[370] The *Mutazalites* hold the position that humans have complete autonomy over their actions, and it is the reason why they are being referred to as the *Qadariya.*

Against the Thesis: Accidents Function in the Material Universe According to Their Own Sets of Laws

Moreover, according to [The *Mutazalites'*] position, the Universe is not free from amalgamation and separation, perpetuity and annihilation, and these are states that can exist without God,[371] just as ships, structures and writings etc. exist by the amalgamation of parts, and it is the same case for separation, and on the same basis is the orbit of the sun, the moon and motion and rest of creation, and there is no Universe without the existence of both substances and accidents. The existence of all this was possible through God and His creation, since the entirety of the Universe was able to exist through God and His creation. The entire Universe was multiple, and this is what the heretics said about two essences, and the naturalists and astrologers said about more than two essences.[372]

Furthermore, according to their teaching, God did not establish any proof of His Creation other than the Universe, nor [did God provide] evidence of His eternity. Therefore, God did not distinguish between those accidents that were created by others and those that were created by Him, because unification or evanescence can be observed but the Mover and Unifier [cannot be seen]. [According to their belief] it is possible that they are from another and not God, even if this is not

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371 Al-Māturīdī is alluding to the *Mutazalites* position that the Universe is eternal and that God does not 'interact' with creation. But it is important to note that the *Mutazalites* still hold the view that God is the cause of the existence of the Universe.

372 Al-Māturīdī is alluding to the well-known arguments made by the opponents of the *Mutazalites* where they claim that the view of the *Mutazalites* results in making humans equivalent to the Creator, which can be seen in issues such as Free Will (where they argue that humans 'create' their own actions) and evil (where they argue that humans 'create' evil).

observed - since they are equating God to that which is observed.[373] Hence, this is similar to the belief of the Dualists and Naturalists, who argued that things come into existence through [separate gods of good and evil, or natures], without each of them establishing a proof that what it creates can be distinguished from what was created by another; and this is a sign of non-omnipotence.

The proof that God provided as evidence that He created the Universe in its entirety is [found in the following verse of the Holy Quran]; *"if there would be a God besides Him, then each of them would have declared independence with his creation."*[374] Hence, according to them, God did not declare independence with His [own] creation [and] He did not signify [that it was created by Him].

In addition, [according to the position of the *Mutazalites*] if you imagine the separation of bodies into parts that are not divisible, each part of which is withheld from perception by the senses in such a way that could be comprehended by reason, and their combination is effected by other than God in proportion to their subtlety and density, the proofs of God based on the perception of bodies become impossible. If God did not make clear to His creation that [everything] that they know is from Him, based on evidence that repudiates that [the Universe was created] by another, in order to confirm that what they sense exists through Him, then what about in the case of what He conceals from them? So those of whom I mentioned from the Dualists as well as others drew the analogy that none of [the gods] provided evidence of their actions, since there is no evil [for someone] which cannot be good for someone [else], and it is the same for states such as heat and cold to the utmost things

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[373] Al-Māturīdī is arguing against the *Mutazalites* position that God is not directly involved in creation.

[374] Quran, Surah *al-Mu'minun* (23:91)

that can be reached by nature, and it is the same case for the stars and Planets.[375] *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

[375] Al-Māturīdī is claiming that according to the *Mutazalites,* the Universe functions according to its own sets of laws, without direct involvement from God. According to him, this then means that God did not provide signs of His existence in the Universe for His creation to comprehend. Therefore, he says they hold the same opinion as the Dualists, who also allegedly teach that God did not leave signs of His existence in the Universe, because there is nothing that is in its totality good, which would indicate towards the 'god of Good' and likewise for the 'god of Evil'.

Against the Thesis: Humans, Based on their Freedom, can Act in a Way that God did not Know Previously

[Shaykh] Abū Manṣūr said that the monotheists drew inferences based on the Dualists denial of two statements. The first is that each of [the gods of Light and Dark or Good and Evil] is able to conceal something from the other and can do something which the other does not know. [This would be the case] even if they replied in the affirmative as it results in one or both of them being ignorant, whereas if they replied in the negative, then it results in the both of them being ignorant and incapable - and incapability invalidates Divinity. The second statement is that whatever one of the essences [i.e. the Good and Evil or Light and Dark of Dualism] wants to prove, the other essence wants to deny, and as such, they are contradictory [and conflicting in their essence]. Therefore, existence indicates that there is [only] one Creator.

Furthermore, according to the School of the *Mutazalites*, a person can perform an act which is outside of the knowledge of God, since whoever in the knowledge of God is an unbeliever can be a believer, and the reality of his existence is outside of God's knowledge. This necessitates that a person can conceal his acts from God, then [this would mean that] he did not deny [God's oneness], and it would be a similar case if there were another God. This is so that you know that their School, when studied, is the school of heretics; since that by which monotheism is proven, is that which invalidates [the position of] both Schools.[376] *God is the grantor of success.*

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[376] Al-Māturīdī is referring to the belief held by Avicenna and some *Mutazalites* regarding God's knowledge of particulars. This was a reason for Al-Ghazali to argue that Avicenna's teaching traversed the bounds of Islam. To briefly summarise, Avicenna differentiates between knowledge of particulars (*Juzi*) and knowledge of

The second [refutation of the *Mutazilites*] is that they affirm that a person has the ability to deny all God's design in propagation and to dismiss God's threat in His saying [in the Holy Quran]; *'I will surely fill Hell with you.'*[377] They hold [the position] that the acts of the disbelievers and devils are other than what God wants, and that God rather wants [these acts] not to be, and in preventing them God uses everything in His bounty, and even if God wants to increase it, He cannot. Then the *Mutazalites* did not preclude the possibility of multiple gods, and [they say] creation is based on how it exists in God's knowledge, as is the situation of the Universe. This demonstrates what I reported - that their School imitates the School of the *Dahrīya* and the School of heretics and it does not [accord] the School of the Muslims. *God is the grantor of success.*

The School of the heretics[378] holds that the Universe was [the result of] the act of two [gods] - neither of whom created, directed or had power over the act of the other, and that each of the two had sole power over a [specific] aspect of the act, whether good or evil, that the other did not have power over. This is similar to the beliefs of the *Magians.*

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general things (*Kulli*). Avicenna then makes a further differentiation between the knowledge of particulars that are known in a general sense and the knowledge of particulars that are known in a specific sense. Avicenna explains that knowledge of particulars in a general sense is known by God, and this is also known by creation. But knowledge of particulars in a specific sense cannot be applied to God as that would entail a change in God - if something occurs, God knowing about it in time is applying time to God, which means making God corporeal. The example of the two types would be saying something specific at a specific point in time, which would be particular, whereas if one states that said person made a statement (but not a specific time), that is general. It seems habitual for Imam Māturīdī to refuse to present the nuance of his opponents' arguments before passing harsh judgements.

[377] Quran, Surah *Sad* (38:85)

[378] The School of the heretics that al-Māturīdī is referring to in this paragraph is that of the Dualists. It could be a specific group of Dualists or he could be referring to them in-toto.

The *Mutazalite* School hold that a person has power over a type of action, which is *Kasb* (acquisition [of the action]), while God has power over another aspect [of the action] which is bringing it into existence, [but] God does not have power over, nor can He create, the act that belongs to a person, and it is the same case for people with respect to God's acts. In addition, it is based on these two [namely, God and humans] that the direction of the Universe revolves. Therefore, they imitated [these other Schools] in their conclusion. Then the [*Mutazalite*] School became even more repulsive in that they made person's power over [acts such as] motion and being at rest derive from [God], since when they gave God power [over these acts], they removed power from the person. We do not see the Dualists removing power [from either one of their gods] by giving it to the other [god]. As such, let it be known that the meaning of power is a Divine attribute according to the Dualists, which is through and from God, but in the case [of the position of the] *Mutazalites,* this results in depriving God of the power of existing in Himself, which is a more repulsive view. The second is their falsehood, since they ascribe to a person, in his [part] of the act that which they ascribe to the Creator; but they did not [give the person] the title of 'Divinity' or the name of 'Creator', by which God is known for creating things.[379]

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[379] The question of 'Free Will' in Islamic theology has a variety of opinions, and al-Māturīdī does speak in detail about the issue later in his book. All the groups that disagree with each other regarding the issue of humans' Free Will (or lack thereof), present alternative opinions in a dramatized and highly negative light. In terms of the *Mutazalites*, they do not in fact argue that a person has complete power over their actions as Imam Māturīdī claims, nor that this person's power is equivalent to the power of God. I will briefly explain the positions of the Māturīdī, *'Ash'arī* and *Mutazalite* Schools for the benefit of the reader. The Māturīdī's argue that a person has Free Will but the power for the performance of the act is from God. So, as a person with Free Will, I can choose to raise my hand, but the physical movement of my hand into the air is performed by God, in that He causes my hand to move upwards. The

Therefore, the *Mutazalites* increased the rank of humans [by superseding] God's power, because they argue that God cannot act on His promise to keep it, even though power is attributed to Him. This is similar to what the [*Mutazilites*] mentioned in terms of a person's lifespan and sustenance that was allotted by God, but then another person comes and kills him before he has completed this allotted lifespan, and [despite this, according to them] God has fulfilled His promise, and His power remains. In addition, God cannot prevent a person from doing what he wants to fulfil, as God does not deprive a person of the power to act. As such, the power of a person becomes greater, and his will is more efficacious. God's Divinity does not allow for such ascriptions.[380]

'Ash'arī School argues that it is God who decides that I will raise my hand in the air, and then I believe (falsely) that I am making the choice of moving my hand in the air. The implementation of the movement of my hand into the air is also from God. On the other hand, the *Mutazalites* remove God's engagement with the Universe, and as such they argue that God created both me and my Free Will, but gave me the ability to choose to raise my hand in the air, and I then raised my hand in the air by myself, without God being engaged in the act, except that He gave me the ability to do it in the first place. An example of these various positions would be a parent who takes their child to a toy shop; the child chooses the toy and then pays for it. According to the Māturīdī School, the child chooses to buy, say, a 'Star Wars' action figure, but the act of paying for and buying the toy is performed by the parent. In the *'Ash'arī* School, it is the parent who chooses the action figure and then pays for it, the child merely being present during the process. In the *Mutazalite* School, the parent gives the money to the child and the child then chooses the toy and pays for it. In debates, the Māturīdīs argued that the *Mutazalites* had given the child Divine powers and that the *'Ash'arīs* had removed all choice from him. The *'Ash'arīs* argued that the Māturīdīs and *Mutazalites* had given the person complete autonomy of action, by which they meant that they were equating the person to God.

[380] This is a disagreement between the *Mutazalite* and Māturīdī School in terms of the issue that God allocates to a person a specific lifespan - but what if someone were to commit suicide or is murdered earlier than this supposed allocation; then is it because of the person's or murderer's decision or due to God's decision? Let us use the example of a person who has been allocated sixty-five years to live by God but commits suicide

The Dualists argue that Light mixed into the confines of Darkness in a manner [that caused it to be] concerned about its Goodness, and therefore it repelled Evil from its essence, and likewise for the Darkness (according to those who argued that the penetration begins from [the Darkness]). Both contentions are incorrect, because the actions [of Light and Darkness] turned out contrary to what they wanted, and each of them of attempted to liberate itself from the grasp of the other. As such, it makes it necessary to attribute error, ignorance and incapability to Light. More specifically, the error is that the result was not the intended outcome, its ignorance is that Light does not know that it remains mixed with its enemy, while its inability is that it is attempting and planning to escape but is unable to do so.

The position of the *Mutazalites* bears some similarity [to the Dualists], in that God does not support a disbeliever or anyone else except in order to obey Him and does not give anyone possession over anything except to give thanks [to Him], and God does not create anyone except for them to submit to Him. This is what God wants, and He does that which pleases Him. If other than this emerged from God, then He would be foolish and oppressive, which would mean that everything that God gave to His enemies is not [actually] what He wanted, and as such God

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at the age of forty-five. The *Mutazalites* have two viewpoints. The first is that when the person committed suicide, he died due to his allotted time, meaning that forty-five was his allotted time to live all along. The second position they hold is that God provides two allotted lifespans, the first is sixty-five and this is based on the situation that there is no external factor such as suicide which causes him die before his allotted time and the second is if he commits suicide or is killed, which in our example is the age of forty-five. The basis of their position lies in a *Hadith Qudsi* [these are *hadith* purportedly revealed by God and transmitted by the Prophet (although unlike the Quran, their reliability is questionable)] which states that, '*God will punish one who commits suicide with Hell, as My slave has expedited My Decree'*. The Māturīdī proof is the narration; '*when their allotted time [of death] comes to them, it will not be delayed nor occur earlier*'.

made mistakes. This error is clear, as the [person] does not turn out as God wanted. The [person's] power [when performing an act] would be outside of [God's] knowledge. Then what is proven after the [occurrence] of the act, which [is demonstrative] of the act of God [in relation] to the present Universe, is God's refusal to prevent [the negative act]. Therefore, this results in the [*Mutazalite's*] claim [about this issue] being a mere imitation [of these other schools] through all manners of blame [being directed towards God].

[Shaykh] Abū Manŝūr said that the heretics denied that a thing comes into existence from nothing, because this is not conceivable in their fancy, and the anthropomorphists state the same concerning bodies. The *Mutazalites* denied that the acts of [people] are created since this does not conform to reason and the imagination [of people]. The *Qadriya* argue that God does not allow [that which is outside of the] limit of good that He is capable of, but [the person] does so [by acting outside of the limit of good]. The heretics[381] make a similar claim - that God creates good, and that the creator of evil is other than Him. The *Qadriya* similarly argue that God does not have power over any evil thing in existence, and that all of this [evil is as a result of the] actions of people. The *Mutazalites* argue that God does not want evil for or from anyone and [that rather] Satan is the one that wants it. Then if this [evil that exists] is not what God wants, this bears similarity to the notion proposed by the heretics who stated that evil was from Satan and [that he is] the creator of evil,

[381] Here, most likely al-Māturīdī is referring to the *Mutazalites,* as they hold that evil is as a by-product of human actions. But the fact that he named them earlier in the paragraph means that he could be referring to another group that also held the same belief.

even though God did not want it to occur.[382] *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

[382] Al-Māturīdī argues later in his book that both Good and Evil are from God, but it is out of respect for His Divinity that we did not ascribe evil to God. The *Mutazalites* on the other hand argue that because God is Good, He cannot be the reason for Evil, as He cannot have negative ascriptions such as 'injustice', and as such Evil is from people, so that God is able to and justified in punishing people for their evil acts.

Description of God and Attributing Names to Him does not Entail Anthropomorphism.

[Shaykh] Abū Manṣūr said that a sect[383] denied that an attribute of God is an essence that He can be described by, or that there are essential names by which He can be known, as they posited that this entails anthropomorphism, since He would have a name [and attributes] like other beings. They argued that it is not possible for one to make an analogy of God with anything from the entirety of creation [or anything that] refers to [the creation], because it is evident that analogy is affected by the name that is more appropriate for each thing. It was for this reason that [this sect] refused to ascribe the words 'thing,' 'knowing' and 'capable,' [to God], citing by way of an example [their congruence with the words that cannot be ascribed to God such as] 'for Him' and 'to Him,' since they result in similarity and limit. [It is the same case for those who state that] God is in all locations, because locations have finite [limits], so describing [God by] using [all places] and by one [place] are equivalent and as such the same applies to the first case [in terms of applying names to God that anthropomorphise Him]. *God is the grantor of success.*

The basis of our position is that God has Essential Names by which He is called, such as God saying that He is 'Merciful', and Essential Attributes that describe God, such as Him having Knowledge of things and Power over them. However, this description of God is from us, and the name is in fact what our [intellect] can comprehend and our expressions can attain out of necessity, since our approach is [to know

[383] Al-Māturīdī is referring to the *Mutazalites*, who as we have read, argue against the existence of the attributes of God.

God] through what is known and what we observe [in the present Universe], which requires verbal resemblance, since it is from the known and visible that God is considered. Nonetheless, it is necessary to define the concept from the present Universe to deny any similarity. As I have mentioned, we name Him out of necessity, and if it were in our capacity to call God by names that were not held by anything else, we would do it. But in fact, the present Universe is evidence of God, and through it, He must be known, so from it, God determined His names to approximate the sense He wished [to convey], even though God is above having likeness or similarity. Do you not see that the expression that we use in calling Him 'Knowing' and 'Capable' in language is different, without there being an actual difference? This shows you that the names that we call God are expressions which bring the meanings closer to understanding, not that they are in reality His names - since at their core they have qualities that God's Divinity is beyond, a negative expression is linked to them, so He made monotheism proof of an essence within a negation, and a negation within proof of what was explained.[384] *God is the grantor of success.*

The proof of our position are the Prophets and the books that were sent from Heaven, and if in the naming of what the Prophets brought was a likening [of God to creation], the [Prophets] would be a cause for negating monotheism. But they all preached worshipping the One and knowing the Oneness of the Creator. Therefore, this cannot mean that there are multiple gods, and nor can it mean that God is similar to the creation. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

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[384] To explain the fact that over several chapters al-Māturīdī is rehashing points made earlier, sometimes using different arguments but in many cases using the same points that have been made previously, it is my personal belief that these writings or lectures never meant to be the collected book that we find in contemporary times.

However, since such names can contradict the designation of the things known by their name, it is permissible to use them along with the [following verse of the Holy Quran]; *"nothing is in his similarity"*;[385] so that the somethingness of things from simple elements is denied, such as accidents and attributes, as well as composite substances such as bodies. *Assistance is through God.*

Furthermore, we find based on our observation, that the entire Universe is compelled and incapable of directing itself, ignorant of its start, and how much of each state of time and space it annihilates and in which it exists cohesively, and which contains opposites [with contradictory natures] that by their nature should repel. As such, it signifies that they do not exist through themselves and that the One who designs them and creates them had knowledge of them and power over them, since it is contrary for anything that is other than God to be able to coincide with His Essence, and this does not contradict the evidence of power over them in Himself and knowledge of their state. It is necessary to verify this meaning, of which the evidence lies in the visible world, since there is no way to know God other than through it. Similarly, if this was by the direction of [a creator] before God to whom the first situation reverts, then this involves all that we have explained.

The *Bāṭiniyyah*[386] are those who derive the mentioned names from the First and Second Originators, such as the Intellect and the Soul, and [argue] that the entire Universe emanates from the Intellect, from which the Soul draws aid, which supplies the *Hayūla* (Primary or Raw Matter).

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[385] Quran, Surah *as-Shuraa* (42:11)

[386] The *Bāṭiniyyah* are an Isamaili *Shia* sect, and this term has been used by many Sunni theologians, such as al-Ghazali, in order to attempt to refute the dogmas of Ismaili Shias. *'Bāṭiniyyah'* refers to esotericists, as they claimed that they followed hidden infallible 'Imams', who interpreted the Quran esoterically.

They posit that the Intellect was [present] at Creation and was its cause, from which everything that exists emanated. It is impossible that creation emerges from a being that does not know what it is to cause emanation at [the time of] creation, or it does not [possess the ability] to be emanated or that it does not want to be emanated. [Therefore,] it is similar to the act of an entity such as 'Nature', in that it does not feel or know and is not described as having power over [things]. So according to this position [in terms of] God, the denial of [God's] Attributes and Names out of fear of likening [Him] to creation, enters into a state of the negation of His Attributes. God becomes such that nothing points to Him as evidence, and speech about God is only in the form of imitation of authority, which is an unlikely [proposition].[387] *God is the grantor of success.*

Furthermore, it is asked, is 'God' His name or the name of something other than Him? This, in reality, goes back to the name of the 'Intellect', and 'Merciful' is the name of the Soul in their School. They rejected the name out of fear for likening God to creation. Then they made the Deity worshipped as God, merciful, compassionate and to be innumerable other things and parts that it is difficult to count, as though the Prophets preached the worship of multiple [Gods] as opposed to one God.[388] *It is to God we turn for aid.*

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[387] This idea is not only restricted to the *Bāṭiniyyah*, but in fact the view that everything comes from the 'First Intellect' is held by many philosophers, with some arguing that this First Intellect is God, whilst others do not name this entity 'God', but give it the same characteristics as God, which would entail Divinity. This also bears similarity to Avicenna's view of the Universe.

[388] Al-Māturīdī is explaining that this is one of the reasons as to why the *Mutazalites* reject the 'Attributes of God', because they argue that these attributes result in God being in parts, where each attribute is a separate part, and when they come together, they make the whole, which is God. But God cannot be in parts and therefore what it

Then when they said, 'He has no name,' it is said to them, 'what do you mean by the statement that 'He has no essential name and no essential attribute'?' Thus, they find no way to explain their statement that 'He has no name,' and this statement invalidates all those who state that, 'God has no essential name.'

Then they claimed that God has a name other than [God], such as 'the Creator of creating, He is the Cause of creation, the Causer that is neither caused nor a cause' because every caused thing can become a cause of a state.

It is said to them that since they argue that God's name is other than Him, 'Was that name given to God by someone else, or did God give this name to Himself?' If they respond 'No, God can name Himself whatever God wants of other things, and cause and effect', in that case, this is a saying that is figurative and not necessarily a statement of reality, and something other [than God, such as us] needed this name for Him without it being needed by God.

If they posit that creation is from God, it is said to them that it was God who brought the creation into existence from non-existence and God who verified for [the creation] those names [of God] that, in any case, were from Him, to the extent that [the creation then] required a name for God. [If this were not the case, it would be] necessary [for this creation] to be made by another creation [who did not provide his creation with a name for him] and so on *Ad Infinitum*, which is impossible, and they do not claim that. It is not acceptable to state that the creation created itself, so that it is infinitely creating, and therefore

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means is that each part, or in this case, each attribute, is a God, and therefore it would entail that there are multiple Gods.

all of this necessarily requires the Essential Names of God. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

[Shaykh] Abū Manŝūr said that according to our position the absolute name [of God] cannot be likened to creation, because every opposite exists in the present Universe under a name, such as life and death, light and darkness, good and evil, and belief and disbelief, and for each thing there is a separate word. Thus, if there were a similarity in the absolute name, the opposite would not be known, and there would be no difference in the name. It signifies that [these names] were made due to what is meant by the difference and similarity whose reality would not be known if they did not have a name. If it was due to the name coinciding and the denial of the meaning [of the name] for which there is similarity between that which can be comprehended and the application [of the name] in this Universe, [in the] the higher and lower Universe, then the first and second creator [meaning the Intellect and the Soul] would not be named, and there would be a correlation between those who claimed that He does not have a name and the others that deny the name for all things. However, the *Bāṭiniyyah*, find the claim of 'one' of creation, a denial of likening, even if there is congruence in respect to the name of 'ones'.[389]

Furthermore, for them, the Creator is a cause and is not described as a thing, because things come into existence through it. All accidents are not described by knowing, capable etc. So, if there were a similarity in proving the name, there would be [a similarity] in denying this as well, in

[389] Al-Māturīdī is positing that the *Bāṭiniyyah* argue against the names/attributes of God because they indicate similarity with creation, but then they use the name 'one' for God, but say that it is a denial of likening, even if there is similarity with the creation in terms of what is meant by 'one' in its customary usage.

the way that we have mentioned.[390] *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

[390] Shaykh Abū Manṣūr is attempting to argue that if one denies the attributes based on their similarity with creation, then denying them also results in a type of similarity, because according to al-Māturīdī, if you say God is not a creator because a person also creates, you are making the assumption that God, in his Essence, is similar to the creation, so that His form of creating bears similarity to a person's form of creating.

Why did God Create the Universe?[391]

[Shaykh] Abū Manŝūr said that people disagreed in their response to the question, 'Why did God create the Universe?'

One sect responded by stating that the question is flawed, and [this question] cannot be posited because God is [eternally] wise, knowing, self-sufficient, and as such His acts cannot contravene wisdom. This is because actions that contravene wisdom are due to foolishness or it is feared that a benefit [based on one's caprice] will be lost if the path of wisdom is kept. If God is omniscient, self-sufficient and not affected by needs that would be fulfilled by contravening [wisdom], then it is a flawed [premise] to argue that God's acts can contravene wisdom — postulating 'why' does not contain wisdom. Therefore, it is due to this reason that God forbade envisioning that His act was in vain, as he mentioned [in the following verse of the Holy Quran]; *"We did not create the Heavens and the Earth, and everything between them just for amusement"*[392] to [the verse] *"He is never to be asked about anything He does, while all others are*

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391 Shaykh Abū Manŝūr begins this chapter with a supplication, but because it disrupts with the flow of the book for the uninitiated, I have chosen to remove it. The only place a supplication that begins a chapter was included in the translation was at the beginning of the book.

392 Quran, Surah *Al-Anbya* (21:16). In reference to his point he is using the verses located in Surah *Al-Anbya* from 21:16 to 21:23, which are translated as follows: *"Had We intended to take a diversion, We could have taken it from [what is] with Us - if [indeed] We were to do so," "Rather, We dash the truth upon falsehood, and it destroys it, and thereupon it departs. And for you is destruction from that which you describe," "To Him belongs whoever is in the heavens and the earth. And those near Him are not prevented by arrogance from His worship, nor do they tire," "They exalt [Him] night and day [and] do not slacken," "Or have men taken for themselves gods from the earth who resurrect [the dead]?" "Had there been within the Heavens and Earth gods besides Allah, they both would have been ruined. So exalted is Allah, Lord of the Throne, above what they describe."*

questioned,"[393] and God brings calamities to those [people] who assume that He has needs or does foolish things. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

A group of the *Mutazalites* answered [the question of *al-'Aŝlaĥ* (the most optimum)][394] by stating that God saw what was most optimum and so He did it. Therefore, He cannot be questioned for His most optimum act.[395] [Shaykh] Abū Manŝūr said that this statement of *al-'Aŝlaĥ* (the most optimum) means nothing more than 'wisdom'. In fact, the latter is more preferable. On the other hand, if something other than wisdom is meant by it, then the statement of the notion of *al-'Aŝlaĥ* is similar to that of 'why did he do'?

Furthermore, the concept of *al-'Aŝlaĥ* implies the question of the condition of the most optimum act, i.e., on what basis should it be the way it is? However, the people who are most rightfully ashamed of this question is them. This is because there is nothing which is a condition for the *'Aŝlaĥ* that cannot be at the same time a condition of corruption, and in that is the biggest corruption of all.

On the other hand, there is nothing which is wise that can be foolish. This is because the interpretation of '*'Aŝlaĥ*' is that it is meant to be more suitable than anything else, and according to their position, corruption to [the creation] may occur through [God creating by way of *'Aŝlaĥ*].

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[393] Quran, Surah *Al-Anbya* (21:23)

[394] *al-'Aŝlaĥ* is 'the Most Optimum' and means that God always creates the Most Optimum.

[395] According to the *Mutazalites,* the basis of this position is that God's act is based on absolute justice and as such His act does not contravene this justice, and therefore injustice and evil cannot come from God (as explained in a previous note). Instead, alternatively, al-Māturīdī argues for the notion of divine wisdom, meaning that because God's act entails absolute wisdom, His act can never contravene wisdom. God cannot become devoid of wisdom and therefore all acts of God are based on divine wisdom.

However, the interpretation of 'wisdom' means 'correctness', in the sense of putting everything in its rightful place, which in fact means justice from which God's act does not exceed. In addition, God is the creator in His Essence, which is the Attribute of Praise and Majesty. Hence, it is absurd that God has earned that [ability]from among other than Him [such as the creation], because that would assume that in it there is a benefit for God [by creating by way of *'Aṣlaḥ*] and the one who is described as deriving benefit is in need. But since God is the Creator in His Essence, it is impossible that God is no Creator at all. Therefore, the question 'why?' is absurd in the same way as are the questions of 'why is He powerful?' or 'why does He know?' *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Another sect states that since God is beneficent, generous and capable, it is necessary to describe Him by profusion of beneficence, so there must be a creation through whose creation God can be a profuse giver to whom He bestows beneficence, and God is capable, and power that does not realize the act is fruitless; and therefore, God created. *God is the grantor of success.*

Another sect states that the question is impossible because it requires a cause to precede what God creates. Thus, the cause is either a creation, so asking about it is asking about all [of creation], or the cause is not a creation, which results in something other than God being pre-eternal, but rather God created because the act of creation is in His Essence, as was stated. *God is the grantor of success.*

Another sect states that the question is nothing more than [an issue of] notions. It is either stating that 'why did He create this Universe rather than creating another?' - the question in this aspect is like the other [question mentioned above] - also it is the same case in statements such as 'why did He not create a creation to [exist] before the time that it

actually [existed]?' Or 'why did He not create creation to be before the time that it was?'[396] On the other hand, [the question] is asking about the reality of the Universe, and so [the person's] question is about himself, as if he were stating 'why am I asking?' and 'what was the reason for asking?' and 'why am I not other than rational?' which is a defective [line of questions], because it involves preventing himself from asking [the question]. *God is the grantor of success.*

Another sect states that God created the Universe for [the] causes it is from, in and after. It is reasonable to expect all wise people to know that intention precedes creating, and in the same vein, any doer who does not know the consequences of the act that he performs is not wise. They then disagreed about the meaning behind creation. Some said that [God] created the Universe to test [His creation], since wisdom appears in [the creation] as do loftiness, dominion, glory, and elevation, and through them appear wisdom and foolishness. [Humans] are what is meant by [the reason for] creation, and the [rest of] creation is made for their benefit, to test them, for evidence, and to serve them. Those who are tested were created for worship, or [were created so that they] themselves can seek results for which they are either praised or admonished, and that is what transpires for them.[397] It is out of necessity [that] their Creator is exalted above them in two ways; since those who were created are in need, He composed in them that by which they know

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[396] At this point mid-paragraph Shaykh Abū Manṣūr has written a supplication. As he ends the same paragraph with another supplication, I have chosen to remove it, as it disrupts the point being made. The supplication is the same that he has made throughout the book which is '*there is no strength to find the truth except by God*'

[397] Al-Māturīdī is explaining that some sects argued that the reason for creation was for God to test humankind, and it is for the same reason that the rest of creation was created, namely in order help in the process of testing.

their needs, and what to do to satisfy their needs. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Another sect states that God did not create everything for a trial because there is not a trial behind everything. [Instead] God created [only] some things for a cause, and this is similar to the fact that God did not create everything in [the same] place, because everything has its own place, and God created some [of His creation] for other [reasons]. Therefore, it was on this basis that God commanded the generation [of creation] and then [after this] a trial and penalty [as a result of the acts of people].[398] *God is the grantor of success.*

[398] Al-Māturīdī explains that a sect argues that not all things were created for the reason of testing their conduct. Instead only some were created for this purpose, whilst others were created for other purposes; for example Angels are created for a specific purpose that is unrelated to humankind.

Dispute with Al-Najjar on God's Wisdom and Providence

Al-Hussain [ibn Muhammad ibn Abdullah al-Najjār][399] in his response to this question stated that [the Universe] was created for many reasons,

[399] Abu Abdullah Al-Najjār was a theologian who was considered the leader of his own school, namely the *Najjārīya*. Al-Buruguth, who al-Māturīdī mentions later, propagated the positions of the *Najjārīya* School. Al-Najjār to an extent followed the teachings of Bishr al-Marisi, a student of Abū Ḥanīfah, who was considered an advocate of the *Murji'a* School. This means that the views of al-Najjār bear similarity to the *Murji'a* School with some distinctions. Imam Abu Hanifa was an enigmatic teacher who taught students from a wide variety of backgrounds. Those who learnt from him placed reason centrally. It was based on this that three branches of differing theological groups emerged from his teachings, the Māturidīs, the *Mu'tazalites* and the Murji'a, who despite differing in theology, followed Hanafi Fiqh (jurisprudence). Abu Hanifa's Māturidī students (even though they preceded al-Māturidī, their views aligned) were scholars such as Imam Muhammad (d. 189/805) and Imam Abu Yusuf (d. 181/798). The *Mu'tazalite* students included Abu Hanifa's son and his senior student Imam Zufar (d. 158/775). *Murji'a* students included scholars such as his senior student Bishr al-Marisi (d. 218/834). It was in the famous exchange of letters between Abu Hanifa and Uthmaan Al-Bathi that Abu Hanifa was attacked for holding to *Murji'a* doctrine (an allegation he accepted without hesitation). Therefore, it is quite plausible that Abu Hanifa held certain opinions that aligned with the *Murji'a*. The *Murji'a* were the diametric opposite of the famously violent Khawarij; they held that only God can judge if a person is a Muslim and therefore any conclusion made on this matter should be delayed for God to decide the outcome as to someone's theism in the Hereafter. Many of these teachings were later adopted by Al-Maturidi and formed a part of Sunni theology. The major point of contention between them and their opponents was their view that sin, which included major sin, had no effect on one's belief in God. Even though their position may seem inconsequential nowadays, they should be appreciated for being one of the main reasons for people not holding the notion that sin is equivalent to disbelief. For example, the *Khawaarij* held that major sin was equivalent to disbelief, the Hanbalites held that certain sins were equivalent to disbelief (such as simply missing prayers) and the *Mu'tazalites* held that whilst committing a major sin a person resides in a state of limbo between belief and disbelief. Hence, this position of the *Murji'a* was incorporated into Sunni Islam - to its great benefit.

including as evidence and proof, then lesson and warning, then blessing and mercy, then nourishment and livelihood, and administering needs, and what was created [of the Universe] is a blessing for one [person] and tribulation for another. He said that if the beginning of creation were for no other reason other than for advantages and benefits, it would not be possible for anything to be moved up in time or postponed, nor would it be possible for anything to be created before the creation of those who were [to be] tested, or [to] transform something from one state to another, or to increase or decrease [created things]. Since God has created things that cannot be grasped by the imagination and is concealed from view of humankind[400], this signifies that the situation is not like this, but rather that things are in their [proper] place, and divert things from benefit to harm, and from harm to benefit. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

[400] An example of this are creations such as Angels and *Jinn*.

The Question of Why God Created the World (Against Al-Najjar, the *Mutazalites* and the Ismailis)

[Shaykh] Abū Manṣūr said that according to them, in the entirety of the topic there was nothing for God [to do] other than what He did, and nothing of what God did was preferable, since in His every act God was compelled [to do as He did], and God did not have a choice in it, since if something other proceeded from Him, God would be a corrupter, and He would be incapable of bettering others, and that would be the end of blame [as a result of a person's actions].[401] *God is the grantor of success.*

If it were not possible for God to do other than what He did, then God would be benefitting from His [own] act and would need it to be praised and glorified - since one who does not merit praise except through another is in need of that other to be entitled to that praise, and as such He benefits from [that praise] - because they posit that God's acts are other than Him, and there is nothing that is abandoned by God nor is there anything other than what God does, due to what is other than God being of lower station and less competent. Thus, the benefit in God's act is proven, which in their view, is other than Him. This is the quality of being in need according to the custom of reason. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

[401] Al-Māturīdī is referring to the argument made by the *Mutazalites* that the creation of the Universe was based on the optimal act of God i.e. that this is the best possible Universe and God could only have created the 'best of all possible worlds'.

The Definition of Wisdom[402]

Then with regards to the arguments about commandments and prohibitions, invitation and intimidation, the position of al-Hussein [al-Najjār] accurately explains [the issue]; that God created things such that they are subject to admonishment, knowledge of benefit and harm, being able to extrapolate from what they observe [in the Universe] to the unseen, that they cannot be turned away from knowledge and face ignorance, such that falsehood and all ignobleness is allowed. Furthermore, those that God created received blessings in the creation, and it is necessary based on reason to be thankful for blessings, and so God makes this thankfulness necessary. Then the promise and the threat [of God] is to invite [the person] to glorify God, and the intimidation is to dissuade [the person] from degrading God. Then, since God beneficently bestowed all kinds of generosity, the reward [for gratitude] is limitless, and since disbelief is the utmost disobedience, the punishment for it correlates.

Moreover, faith is a belief in the infinite and cannot become evanescent, and disbelief is a denial of the infinite and cannot become evanescent, and thus on this basis is their requital. For this reason, it is possible to

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[402] Al-Māturīdī and al-Najjār agree that the creation of the Universe was based on the Divine Wisdom of God. They argue that wisdom cannot be detached from the Essence of God and as such all acts of God entail wisdom. This is not a position that is held by the *'Ash'arī* School, who argue that by making the argument that God's acts entail wisdom it means that God is subjugated by wisdom, which is in contradiction to his Divinity.

pardon what is less than disbelief, because it is not a denial of the infinite.[403] *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

[403] Al-Māturīdī is conforming to the standard orthodox opinion that a person will be punished for the act of disbelief, and a person in such a position cannot be requited, but for anything less than disbelief such as sin, a person can ask for forgiveness from God and based on sincere *Tawba* (repentance) a person can be pardoned. But rejecting God after understanding that God exists is something that is not forgiven.

God's Command and Prohibition (In Agreement with al-Najjār)

[Shaykh] Abū Manṣūr said that according to our position, the wisdom behind commands and prohibitions is the knowledge of [God], who gives the commands and prohibitions, since God - out of the entirety of creation - gifted humans knowledge of these [and] as such they cannot neglect it, just as a thing that contains benefit cannot be neglected. Furthermore, given that according to reason there is the beauty of every beautiful thing and the ugliness of every ugly thing, then the act of the ugly thing is ugly, and the act of the beautiful thing is beautiful, hence the commands and prohibitions are necessary due to the status of what is commanded and prohibited. Moreover, because God created all things [and] this proves His Oneness and Wisdom, then creation cannot be emptied of knowledge of that, since creation would [then] be in vain. This is because removing the obligation eliminates the wisdom of creation, since its end is annihilation; and anyone who constructs something only for negation and no other purpose is egocentric and is not wise.

God's Promise and Threat (In Agreement with al-Najjār)

The promise and the threat [of God] are for invitation and intimidation; since without them, the benefit of following commands and the harm of disobedience would be lost, and for those that have been created there would be no benefit in their acts. If there were no benefit for the one who follows the commands [of God] or harm for the one who disobeys, the meaning of commands and prohibitions would be in vain, since there would be no benefit for the one giving the commands and prohibitions. Therefore, the promises and the threats [of the Hereafter, namely Paradise and Hell] are necessary for wisdom. Furthermore, in command and prohibition there is a struggle of the soul which forces it to overcome what [its] nature hates, and the soul withdraws from what it hates, and so the [person] being tested does not find a path to overcome it and turn it to what he desires except [by] using the motivation [of God's] promises and threats; even if sees [the pleasures of this life], it is easy for him to give them up and tolerate great pains.[404]

Furthermore, humans were created as beings for whom it is repulsive to do that which does not have beneficial outcomes or that from which harmful outcomes are feared. As such, it is necessary that their actions [take this under consideration], and this is the reality of the promise and threat [of Paradise and Hellfire]. If it were not for this, the consequences would be the same for [both] friends and the enemies, and since they

[404] Al-Māturīdī is explaining the wisdom of God's promises and threats. He explains that detaching wisdom from these acts would result in foolishness. God's commands are based on wisdom and it is wise to follow them and contravening them is a foolish act, whereas if God's commands were not based on wisdom and instead were foolish, then in fact it would be wise not to follow those commands, because foolishness is the diametric opposite of wisdom.

differ concerning choice and preference, their consequences too must differ. *God is the grantor of success.*

God could have made the reward entirely His favour,[405] since there were previously blessings from God that deserve thanks to the limit of [ones] capacity, and so [an aspect of] the reward is God's favour. Then, in addition [this favour] is multiplied, as God states [in the following verse of the Holy Quran]; *"Whoever comes [on the Day of Judgement] with a good deed will have ten times the like thereof [to his credit], and whoever comes with an evil deed will not be recompensed [according to his evil]"*,[406] so God mentioned concerning evil [that] the punishment that is required because of wisdom, and the reward is multiplied on the basis of God's favour, since that is its principle. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

This is according to what can be comprehended by reason about what requires command and prohibition. There is sufficient proof brought by God's messengers that forces us to admit the magnitude of the wisdom in both [command and prohibition], even if reason is unable to comprehend it. In the case of reason, there is a refusal to give up its use; like the other kinds [of created things] that can be prevented from [rendering] those benefits that they are purposed for, so it is with reason. In terms of what I have mentioned regarding the other [created things], this is [also] the reality and indication of action as well. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

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[405] *Fadl* could refer to 'grace' or 'favour'. I have chosen to use favour in this section.

[406] Quran, Surah *Al-An'am* (6:160)

On the Correct Understanding of the Maxim 'Whoever Knows Himself, Knows His Lord'

If [a person] were to posit that 'rational beings are in agreement that he who knows himself, knows his Lord', however people disagreed on the manner of knowledge. For example, the Dualists stated [that it meant that] when [a person] knows that he himself encompasses [both] good and evil, he knows that there is a Lord for each aspect of him. Then the Jews turned God into one of a part [that makes up God].[407]

The *Mushabbihah* (anthropomorphists) said that God is a body since, in the present Universe, knowledge of the self is [is based on a] body.

Jahm [bin Safwan] said that since [a person] knows that he exists after he did not exist, and [a person] knows that he is a thing; a knowing, hearing, seeing body, [the person] knows that everything that has that name [i.e. a body] is a created thing, and His Lord who created him cannot be a created thing.

According to our position, whoever knows himself, knows his Lord, due to what [a person] knows of accidents in terms of hearing, seeing, etc., through their ignorance of what they can endure, and in the same vein rectifying what is defective in them, and that they are in proportion to the time and space that they occupy, and the types of needs that affect them, whose origin [a person] does not know, and the truth of whose evanescence is similarly unknown to [to the person]. This is his concern, along with their evanescence, that [the person] observes through what he observes of himself. Therefore [a person's] knowledge of previous states, from inception to the present that he is in, with the knowledge of the different states until they emerge from him, is unlikely, and it is even

[407] Please see footnote 442 for a detailed explanation on this issue.

difficult for him to comprehend it - and this is, even more, the case in terms of inability to grasp it based on reason. [The person] knows by necessity that he does not control his own situation as it is, but rather if he did have this control over his own situation, he would control all of these [states] in such a way that he must know all of this. This is because if [the person] did have power over [his own situation], he would not be driven to the ignorance that he displays, nor to the incapability that we mentioned in terms of removing needs from himself and rectifying that which is defective.[408]

In this case, because [the person out of all created beings] is the being that is most able to control what he senses, and the highest in comprehending the realities that he encounters, and the quickest in understanding what is known and said about issues, then [the person] knows his [own] emergence - which is from [the person's] own design in creation, its annihilation, its persistence. Then [as a result], the expression of all sensory beings, since they are under [the sensory being's] control, is that of being perplexed about their [own] needs. Furthermore, [the person] [then] knows [based on this knowledge and applying it to the Universe and its Creator] that such a being that has the ability to understand affairs and comprehend reason, can only be one who is outside of all the qualities that the person himself possesses and [qualities] that change. Therefore, [this person] knows that this being is

[408] Al-Māturīdī is arguing that all groups agree with the notion that 'Whoever Knows Himself, Knows His Lord' but they disagree on what this entails: The anthropomorphists argue that because you know your body, you use this knowledge and then apply it to God and make the assumption that God similarly also has a body; or the Dualists who argue that you know the good and evil contained within you and as such you know the 'god of Good' and the 'god of Evil'. Al-Māturīdī argues his position from a different perspective in that, as we know from ourselves the flaws that are contained within us, our being subjected to accidents and knowing the limits of our reason, we know that our Lord cannot have these originated qualities.

powerful and not incapable, knowing and not ignorant, powerful, and He has no equal in His design.

Hence, [this person] knows that this being is Divine and no thing or quality is similar to Him, since bearing a resemblance to Him requires not being originated and being pre-eternal, or [it would mean that the creation is] designed [by one who is] not Him. This is the case for all things because between them there is a coincidence of needs, types of incapacity and weakness - there are all types [of these things] in the originated [Universe]. It is because of this reason that [a person] must know that [his Lord] is the opposite of him in all aspects, and the aspects he possesses are not [the same as] his designer. This is the definition of the Lord and His capabilities. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

It is on this basis that the position of Jahm [bin Safwan] is flawed: that [God] was not knowing or able and then He became [knowing and able]. In addition, their position is also flawed in that God was not acting or speaking and then He began to do so, since these premises result in a change of aspects and states, which are the reason for a person to know that he is originated. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Furthermore, I mentioned that it is possible to accept the states as [God's] free will, and that He has Essential Attributes such Knowledge, Power, Life, Hearing and Seeing that signify God's existence as the Knowing Creator, and not as natures that are incapable of choice and are ignorant of states, and it is the same case for all types of nourishment. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Similarly, the fact that there is the possibility of good and evil and the various other states is evidence that God turns His direction to those who are not described as bearing [those things] or are not in various

states, so that everything is as God pre-ordains. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

One sect said that whoever knows his [own] hidden self, knows God, and his hidden self is an entity made for the suitability of affairs, being noble, possessing the design of created beings, grasping the hidden realities by thought and inquiry into reasons.[409]

They made a good point. It may apply to what I said that in knowing God there is sufficiency in grasping the hidden things [in man] out of his hidden states, and he grasps the knowledge of what was hidden and is manifest through reason. He knows what was concealed from him and is called a soul first and he later manifests [the true knowledge of this hidden reality]. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

[409] This is the belief that is held by followers of *Tasawwuf* (Islamic Mysticism). Sufis (mystics) held that it only by knowing one's own hidden realities, which are connected to the hidden realities of the Universe, that one can truly know God.

Again: On the Use of the Terms 'Thing' (*Shay'*), Body (*Jism*) And Being (*Huwiyyah*) with God[410]

[In terms of using the word] *Shay'* (thing), it is nothing more than affirmation and [and a term used for] proof of existence, since [the word] *La Shay'* (nothing) is denial. So, man knows that God is a thing, and God did not deny that He is a thing. Since [a person] denies all his own states and knows them without denying their thingness, so [the person] knows his Lord not in the way that [the person] knows God's somethingness. Therefore, [a person's] knowledge that he is a thing does not prevent [the person] knowing God's somethingness, since no thingness directed him towards God.[411] *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

In terms of a *Jism* (body), it is the name for something that is finite, whereas a thing is nothing more than an affirmation. The existence of the present Universe is evidence of this proof, therefore it is said [that God is a] thing, as this is not bound by somethingness, but in terms of being finite it includes the signification that is the denial of [the ascription of] finitude to God (may His praise be magnified). Unless what is meant by 'limits' is Oneness and Divinity, which in that case the expression of [the meaning of] 'limit' becomes void.[412] This is because

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[410] As we can see, there are several chapters and topics that were contained within previous chapters that are repeated. As such, the number of footnotes in these sections is limited as they have been previously explained in detail.

[411] As I have explained previously, the *Mutazalites* argue that God is not a 'thing' but Al-Māturīdī argues God is a thing, because it is mentioned in scripture. Al-Māturīdī argues that by applying 'somethingness' to God merely means that God exists, and it does not mean that God bares similarity to His creation. So a person knowing he himself is a 'thing' does not mean that he has to deny God's 'somethingness', which refers to God's existence.

[412] Al-Māturīdī is arguing that if you say that God having limits means that God is Divine then you are nullifying the meaning of 'limit'. Therefore, it would mean that no

its meaning prevails [and in the case of a body it signifies] the finitude of the thing by its width, and things such as God being 'above', which has the meaning of 'body' in the present Universe. This would [still be the case even if] all sides can be longer, wider and shorter, and this is the reason why their position is flawed. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Then '*Huwiyyah*' (being) in the present Universe equates to existence and interpreting it denies non-existence from it. God has always been and always will be without change, [without] evanescence and [without] transforming from one state to another state, and God is without motion or being at rest. This is because these are descriptions of the various states, since anyone with different states is not separate from them; and whoever is not separate from states is originated. This results in the negation of oneness as well as pre-eternity. The design of others is controlled by [God], since a state, if it existed in itself, could not change so long as it is itself. This signifies the existence of the other [meaning God], due to the change in essential characteristics that it undergoes and its transformation from one state to another.

word has a real meaning, as you can then interchange words and the resulting meaning based on your own volition.

Again: Is God in a Place (Due to His Sitting on The Throne)?[413]

This is evidence that [God's Divinity does not allow] being described by 'place' since it has been proven that God existed when no place existed. In addition to this [the following verse of the Holy Quran]; '*"The Most Merciful [who] established on the throne"*[414] is not proof [that God is in] a place, and nor [are the following verses]; *"We are closer to him than his jugular vein"*[415] and *"whenever three people are whispering, God is the fourth"*[416] and *"We are closer to him than you, but you do not see it.*[417] Applying place [to God] is not a form of glorification or reverence. Whereas, in fact, places are honoured by God, and their fortunes vary by God preferring one place over another place, by designating it for the best of God's creation or by making it for His worship and glorification. It is not the case that someone from among the kings of the Earth or the best of people has his rank elevated because of a certain place, so how can that be possible in the case of the Powerful King without Whom no place is elevated in importance and glory? If this is the case, then there can be no glorification in attributing [things to God]. Then [there is the issue of] being in need, which [God's Divinity does not allow]. Therefore, God's saying [in the following verse of the Holy Quran]; *"The Most Merciful [who] established al-ʿArsh ʾIstawā"*[418] does not mean [that God] is in a place, since the verse is expressing sublimity and glory, and it not possible for God to have a likeness in His creation. Hence, it stands established that this is [meant] in the way of the sublimity and majesty that God deserves

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[413] Al-Māturīdī is once again revisiting the topic of God being in a place.

[414] Quran, Surah *At-Taha* (20:5)

[415] Quran, Surah *Al-Qaf* (50:16)

[416] Quran, Surah *Al-Mujadila* (58:7)

[417] Quran, Surah *Al-Waqi'ah* (56:85)

[418] Quran, Surah *At-Taha* (20:5)

in Himself, and God is as He is, since God was such when there was no creation, and so God cannot describe Himself by [ascribing similarity to the] creation. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

[In terms of the] belief about knowledge preceding a state of one to whom it is attributed in the present Universe before it is attributed [based on] possibility. Then God [existed] when there was no place, and people believed this. It is not possible to change the understanding about attributing what was before, and to [this end] turns the understanding of attributing creation to God. However, applying the attribution of things to God in the present Universe is in order to glorify [those things], in that He made them praiseworthy and favoured them, therefore what becomes of the [understanding] of the throne in this case? *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Furthermore, on this basis, the claim that God is in all places is also flawed, since there is no difference in allocating one place to God as opposed to all places. In fact, the individual [who ascribes] a primary place to God is glorifying [that place], since this entails designating such a thing by mentioning it, and by the mention it results in honouring and distinguishing [that place], as this goes back [to the issue of ascribing something to God] means favouring it. In sending and gathering all [the favour of God], it goes back to the designation of the reality of God's Attributes. Furthermore, it is also said 'Lord of everything' and 'God of everything' to glorify in reverence of Him. Also, if it is said 'Lord of Muhammad' or 'God of Abraham', it is to honour and glorify them. The analogy of this is that the attribution to the throne entails glorifying and honouring the throne, whereas attribution [of God] to all places entails describing God by them, which is repugnant since He was not described

by them pre-eternally.[419] Further, nothing is described as close to God by way of distance and area, nor is God described as close to a thing in the same way; since this involves limits and localisation [of God], but God existed when there was no place, since God is as He was, and is beyond time and place, since the limits and finitude of things derive from these. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

[419] What al-Māturīdī is explaining here is that when one ascribes a created thing to God, such as in the case of Abraham, Muhammad or the *Arsh,* it is in order to glorify those specific creations. But if a person ascribes God to a place, such as holding the incorrect belief that the *Arsh* is the location of God, or ascribing all locations to God, then this is repugnant and not permissible.

On the Application of the Categories: What (*Ma*), How (*Kayfiya*), Where (*Ayna*), and Action (*Fil*) in the Teaching on God's Attributes[420]

Sometimes, a person may express God's name by metonymy, such as when Pharaoh asked *"What is the Lord of the worlds" to [which Moses answered] "He is the Lord of the Heavens and Earth."*[421] Or God saying to Moses *"What is that in your right hand, oh Moses?*[422] To which he replied, *"This is my staff".*[423] The response to this is that [the question]; 'What is He?' may imply 'What is His description?' - the answer to that would be 'He is Hearing and Seeing', but sometimes 'What is He?' may imply 'Which is the thing of the creation by which God's essence could be known?' But God is beyond being likened to anything, whilst sometimes 'what is He?' could imply 'what is His action?' - the answer to which is 'the creating of the creation and putting everything in its rightful place, which is, in fact, His Wisdom,' and sometimes 'What is He?' may imply: 'Where did He come from?' However, God is beyond coming into existence from anything and rather He is the creator of all things. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

[These questions] about the *Kayfiyyah* (qualification) of God are two-fold. The first is that they may seek to make a similarity of God to a thing among things, but God is unique, and so there are none similar to Him. The second is that it may imply an inquiry as to God's description. The answer to this would be the same as to the previous question, meaning

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[420] Al-Māturīdī is revisiting this topic from his argument against the anthropomorphists' understanding of God.

[421] Quran, Surah *Maryam* (19:65)

[422] Quran, Surah *Taha* (20:17)

[423] Quran, Surah *Taha* (20:18)

that there is no qualification of God because in it there is an inquiry about something which is like Him, but God is beyond being like anything in terms of both His Essence and His Attributes. But if the question were as to whether God is described, the answer would be 'Yes', but in such a way as God described Himself - with possessing Mercy, Knowledge and Power.

As to the question, 'Where is He?', it is a question about a place, and we have explained that God is beyond [such ascription]. God is not described by amalgamation or separation from things, or existing in them or emerging from them in terms of distance from where He actually is, because God existed when nothing else existed, and it is impossible for God's state to transform through the existence of another thing, for the reason stated above. It is permissible to disregard [any ascription] to the qualities of creation and its likeness. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Furthermore, [God] is described with 'closeness' in the sense of help and aid, and by way of honour and designation, and by way of mercy and benevolence, and by way of granting success and guidance, and these types of things, because all of this is an essential description. It is permissible to say that [God] is infinitely merciful to His friends, loving them for the time that they are His friends, and hating His enemies in the same manner. However, the aspects that are the realities of such attributes and that another verifies them in God, are not that God is in Himself described by them, as it is a defect, because God cannot but be praised, honoured and glorified, and this would be through another. Therefore, by [God] creating His creation He would become praised and derive benefit, but God is self-sufficient in Himself and above receiving praise or benefit through anyone. Therefore, God is not described by this; may He be glorified.

Moreover, in terms of God's action, God cannot be its effect, because that is [something that is] not known in the present Universe, because God is described by [what we know of the present Universe] and not by [similarity towards] another [being]. Due to what we explained, that description by [the state of] another entails a need for it and being described [by it] in pre-eternity, due to what we explained about the impossibility of change and evanescence. Also, if it were possible for God to be described by what is a state in another, it would be possible [for Him] to be described by anything in His creation, which is forbidden, as we have explained above. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Theodicy: God's Wisdom and Providence in the Creation of Harmful Beings and Substances

[Shaykh] Abū Manṣūr said that the wisdom in creating harmful beings and substances has several aspects[424], even if reason is unable to comprehend the Divine Wisdom based on what was previously mentioned, on the necessity of wisdom in everything in the way that it was created by God.[425]

The first is a test for creation in the present world via harm and benefits so that the pleasure of reward for obedience is known, as well as the pain of punishment for disobedience. This is because creation was designed for results through acts. Hence God made likenesses for them [in terms of rewards and punishments] in corporeal substances so that the promise [of God] can be comprehended in their imaginations, to make the path [to righteousness] easier.[426] *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

The second is that tribulation is a burden that [can be] easier or harder for the body through inquiry and reflection. In undertaking inquiry and reflection, people differ because there is no immediate benefit for these things, and it takes them away from pleasures and appetites [of this world]. Dealing with things is difficult for the body, and in neglecting

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[424] I have not highlighted each instance of al-Māturīdī diverging from convention in his writings, but this is a further example of an instance where I had to rearrange the paragraph so that the point being expressed made sense.

[425] In this section Al-Māturīdī explains the wisdom of creating evil.

[426] The first reason is as a test, so that people are rewarded for their good deeds and punished for evil acts. This is closely linked to the issue of Free Will; with Free Will comes the ability to choose to do good or bad and you are tested by God as to whether you will choose good or give in to your negative desires and indulge in evil.

these things there is disagreement and separation, which leads to hostility and dispute, and in agreement, there is friendship and peace. God made for [creation], in what He created for them, alike enemy in the harms it contains, and an example of friends, in the benefits it contains, so that in evil there is something that drives them to become accustomed to how to deal with enemies and friends. Even if they are tested by the like in their essence, they know how to deal with them in terms of caution, preparation, assistance and aid. On this basis, when they undertake the worship and praiseworthy ethics of which they are capable, youths are commanded to become accustomed to them, so that the path becomes easy for them when it is enjoined upon them. It is likewise [the case] in the creation of what was mentioned.[427] *God knows best.*

Furthermore, irrespective of differences in harms and benefits, God made creation to indicate that there is a wise, knowing designer [who created] these, that He is One in Essence, in respect to indication and testimony. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

In this, there is a wonderful elucidation of God's wisdom; that He combined harms and benefits, good and evil, despite their contradiction, in indicating God's Oneness and testifying that His Divinity is one.[428]

Moreover, God created this to humble powerful [people] and kings, so through it, they know their weakness so that they are not enticed by the multitude of their followers and soldiers into overstepping the bounds of God. Hence they see the dominion of God's power and that God

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[427] The second reason given by al-Māturīdī is that harmful things obstruct one's purpose, which is thoughtful inquiry to reflect on one's reason for being created. One's nature and concomitant desires make it difficult to overcome these and to think autonomously; as such, giving people the opportunity to defeat these obstacles is one of the reasons for creating them.

[428] Another reason given by al-Māturīdī is that opposites - in this case that which is harmful is opposite to that which is beneficial - will give an indication to a wise Creator.

establishes the reign of who He wishes over whomsoever He wishes. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Furthermore, so that it may be known via the contemplation of God's creation of the essence of harm and benefit, that God is self-sufficient and above being affected by needs, because whoever bears that description, God can overcome that which benefits and harms. Hence God's power over what He wishes becomes known.[429]

Moreover, no harmful substances are observed but that they [nonetheless] contain some benefits that created beings may be unable to grasp. For example, fire, which both burns and prepares food and water, which can give life to all things and also destroy them. Likewise, there is no bitter or poisonous substance but that it contains medicine for [some] disease; so that the inquirer may know that saying that the substance is good or evil is a mistake and that rather every substance may give rise to harm and benefit, so through it exists the greatest sign of monotheism.[430]

Furthermore, there are two aspects; one is complete power over what is harmful and beneficial in order to give hope for [reward] and fear [of punishment]. Whoever is not like this [in terms of having complete power over things then] the situation is not such, because instead it would inspire intimidation and not invitation and can only be overcome by one who possesses [power over] both [benefit and harm]. The second is so that lessons are given so that commandments and prohibitions are

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[429] When one contemplates the nature of benefit and harm, one comes to the realisation that there is a Creator who is not subjugated to harms and benefits.

[430] In previous chapters al-Māturīdī explained how diametric opposites that are contained within one substance prove the existence of God. As such, he is now explaining that there is nothing that is considered purely harmful but that there is also a benefit to it and vice versa and this signifies the existence of Creator who brought these opposites together.

correctly instituted, so that inquiry and reflection have scope for [understanding] both, and because there are both warnings and lessons through them. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

The Disagreement of Sects on the Nature of the Universe[431]

[Shaykh] Abū Manṣūr said that I have contemplated the basis of disagreement amongst the people concerning [the nature of] the Universe after signs emerged that it is created [and not eternal] and evidence emerged that it was designed by something other than itself. This is because there is nothing in the essence and basic elements of the Universe that does not in these present proof that it is designed and brought into existence, and that [the Universe] depends on a being who is knowledgeable of its affairs, self-sufficient in the possession its needs, and is wise in putting everything in its place so that it does not conflict or become evanescent. Furthermore, it is not possible that the Universe, in its basic elements, derives from multiple gods, because such a case it would give rise to conflict, with each [god] wanting to give rise to its own power, impose its own dominion and subjugate [another god] that contends with it. Such a state of affairs would lead to annihilation and corruption unless one of them possesses might and aid and all of them yield to him and become lowly and submit to him. This means that all substances of the Universe come into existence by the will of something other than themselves and are controlled by this 'something's' power.

This what is meant by the fact that it is evidence for a designer of the Universe, who is knowledgeable and wise, to embark on and complete it by himself, bringing it from non-existence into existence, since the phenomenon that arise from the fact that the origin of its existence needs someone who knows how to originate things is no less than the phenomenon that it continues and remains in its same state. In fact, it is

[431] Once again, Shaykh Abū Manṣūr begins this chapter with a supplication. Because it disrupts with the flow of the book, I have chosen to remove it.

even more evident that the need in this for another being is greater, since it is unable to design itself and the reasons that it originates from this other being are more apparent. This is because the proofs in each thing that it came into existence after not existing are clearer, since every [person] by using reason is able to remember their own origin or transformation from being small or fragile, whereby if such a whole did not have a beginning, its entire existence is nullified. Furthermore, the possibility of weakness and incapability to the point of annihilation and nullification compels it to the knowledge that it came into existence after not existing. If that is the case for a being who possesses design and knowledge of the conditions [of things], then it is, even more, the case for inanimate objects, which lie at the disposition of animate beings who enjoy them, as they [themselves] are insensible. The fact that there are inanimate things that animate beings enjoy indicates that the being who designed the inanimate objects is the same being who designed animate beings since he created the [inanimate things] to be enjoyed [by the animate], as is good for them.

I have observed doubt present itself to people even after we have proven it in such a manner. [So] as to dispel those doubts for those who apply reason, [there are] three causes [of these doubts].[432] The first is them doing *Taqlīd* [following someone without knowing the evidence] to those whom his mind is accustomed and inclined towards. This is because [this person] has abandoned contemplation of evidence and instead given way to his innate caprices out of his [blind] trust in them, in his hope to be their companion and through them satisfy the soul, or

[432] Al-Māturīdī in this section will revisit the reasons as to why he believes that people have doubts, even though he claims that he has proven his position already. The three reasons he gives are: 1) *Taqlīd* (following someone without knowing the evidence), 2) Those who believe solely in what their senses can perceive, 3) Consideration of qualities, that evil cannot come from good and vice versa.

out of fervour for this opinion to lead him to the right path, or out of eagerness for their favour and other grounds for happiness - until he becomes accustomed to a greedy soul or bad habits.

The second are those who hold the position that existence is only that which falls under their senses. They move from one state to another through material elements and produce and engender children upon one another, and they assume it is impossible that things do not emerge from other things or branches from a root, because they did not observe this occurrence [through the senses], and for them the seen [Universe] is proof of the unseen.

Furthermore, this led to differing [beliefs] and based on these, some of them argued for the pre-eternity of the Universe. But even regarding this, their [opinions] diverged. This is because based on this some of them held the position that the Universe was not created. It was from this that the school of the naturalists emerged, who posited that difference and heterogeneity are based on varying 'natures' and these [natures] striving for supremacy. One of these sects called these [divergent] natures '*Hayūla*'. The heterogeneity that I mentioned is [according to their teachings] like the dye. It emerges in various colours based on different humor and balance. It was on this basis that they argued that the essence of humans is the balance of the different natures and that the [essence] of animals the disorder of natures and likewise for everything else.

There are also those who do not believe its foundation is from the four natures, but instead, each corporeal substance has a foundation, and the natures are intrinsic to it.[433] There are also others [who make a similar

[433] The concept of the Four Humors originated from Ancient Greece, with some arguing that Hippocrates was the founder. It was believed that the human body was made up of four basic substances: black bile, yellow bile, phlegm, and blood. These

argument] concerning the Creator. They argue that God is one and that He is the cause of the existence of the Universe. The fact that He is eternal means that He existed pre-eternally. Furthermore, in proving the existence of a creator, they cite the harmony and masterful disposition of things, which could have only come into [existence] due to a knowledgeable designer. Since nature does not derive from luck, it is through God that things are in a sound state and on this basis, they argued for the [existence of] a creator. Then they argued that since [God] existed pre-eternally it is a necessary consequence that the Universe also existed pre-eternally, in the way that things are intricately linked to their cause.[434] This was on the basis that the Universe is His free gift and

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were linked to various things such as temperament, elements, seasons and various other qualities. In the Islamic world, this form of medicine became famous because of physicians such as Avicenna.

[434] In terms of the idea of the pre-eternity of the Universe being intricately linked to God in the same way that a cause and effect are linked, this was propagated by Avicenna and those following his philosophical school, such as Averroes, al - Tusi etc. A brief summary of their position is that God is unique, and His Existence is necessary due to Himself and this Necessary Existence is due to His Essence and His pre-eternity. The Universe was created by God and relies on God to bring it into existence, but it is not possible for God to have a 'new' will or desire to create, and there can be no reason that can cause a change in His will or desire. Furthermore, such a change cannot occur spontaneously or naturally either as God is absolutely changeless. It is also not possible for God to create the Universe at a specific point in time, as this would entail that there was a period of time 'before' God created the Universe and then 'later' God decided to create it. The relationship between God and the Universe then is one of God being superior to His creation: God is the cause of the Universe and the reason for a possible thing - the Universe - to come into existence from non-existence. This means that the Universe is in need of God. Time then is also something created and is defined as the measurement of the movement of matter. Therefore, time and matter were created simultaneously and are both pre-eternally linked, with time merely being a measure of the movement of matter, meaning that whenever there was time there was matter. Hence there can never be a time before the existence of matter, as time only exists when and where matter exists. Thus, the Universe existed as long as

blessing, and He is Powerful in Himself, which proves His essential goodness and generosity. Therefore, His generosity requires the pre-eternal existence of the Universe, and His Power brings it into existence. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Some of them argued that the Universe was formed out of 'Prime Matter', but even they differed, as some claimed that this is Prime Matter was a pre-existing material, out of which the Creator generated the Universe. One school of thought posited that the creator is one being, whilst another school argued that the creators [of the Universe] are the stars, Sun and Moon - in that they continuously pursued their course, and out of their pursuing their course the Universe emerged. They then gave a start point to this course by making the argument that it is impossible for things to emerge from other things *Ad infinitum* with no beginning. Then there are some who argued that accidents occurred [in the Prime Matter] and from this, the Universe originated. They name this [Prime Matter] '*Hayūla*', and they describe it in the same manner that monotheists describe the Creator. Then they invalidated [this possibility] by stating that [this Prime Matter is subject to] accidents and can change from one state into another.

There are some who argue that the Prime Matter has two aspects [namely], Light and Darkness. From the Light comes all that is good and beneficial and from the Darkness comes evil and harm. Then there are some who say that [the Light and Darkness] were separate and then they mixed, as we have explained [previously]. According to the proponents of the notion of *Hayūla* and Prime Matter, it can be said that they [Light and Dark] were one and then diverged, since it is [originally only] the Prime Matter, and this then became the basis for good and evil. It was

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time existed and is eternal (but not without a beginning outside of time). Therefore, God is linked to the Universe not by time but because of 'emanation'.

by this divergence that each of them performed its own function. However, the majority [of people] who propagate this notion argue that the Universe existed through nature and not because of a voluntary act.[435]

The third way is the consideration of qualities. They argued that the Universe contains benefit and harm, good and evil. Therefore, accordingly, one who does good is praised, and [one] who benefits others is merciful and wise. On the other hand, [one] who does evil is repudiated, and the one who harms others is cruel and foolish. It is not possible to say of God, who is Wise and Merciful, that He has done evil or harm to anyone, and similarly He has no foolishness or cruelty. This is among the things by which He benefits [people] or that [He] repels harm, so then how is it for the One who does not benefit from anything nor is harmed by anything? According to their [belief], one that is wise is clearly one who by his action brings about benefit and not harm.

Moreover, whoever harms another without any benefit to himself is not wise. They posited that the origin of the Universe is through the difference of the Prime Matter that the Universe consists of, so that each existent thing derives from its Prime Matter good or evil. Or the two substances [Good and Evil, Light and Dark] were one and then diverged, and each thing emerged from [the thing that is the same as it], or by the fact that accidents occurred in [the Prime Matter so it] came to differ. The *Dahrīya* (Materialists), who deny the existence of a creator and maintain that everything is multiple, rely on this argument. The Dualists called the essence of good 'Light' and [the essence] of evil 'Darkness', while the Magians called good 'God' and evil 'Satan'.

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[435] Here al-Māturīdī is revising the argument of the Dualists and the pre-eternity of the Universe.

Refutation of Dualism[436]

[Shaykh] Abū Manṣūr said that if these sects closely examined the previously mentioned evidence, they would realise that their intellects are unable to rely on human wisdom nor [are they able to] comprehend the wisdom of the Divinity.

Given the conclusions they reached on Free Will, there is a contradiction in their position, in terms of being able to know the true nature of wisdom and ignorance, since according to their doctrine, in the essence of Evil there is only Evil and in the essence of Good, there is only Good. This means that in what they call 'ignorance' or 'wisdom', they do not know whether it is doing good or evil. According to their teaching, every person is a mixture of both [Good and Evil], and if [he] considers each of them to be the opposite of what he considers the other to be, then it means that what he considers wisdom to be foolishness and foolishness to be wisdom. Therefore, when one states that something is 'good,' this cannot be trusted, since the essence of Darkness is total falsehood and the essence of Light is total truthfulness [in Dualism], so it is not known of which substance he is speaking [since he is a combination of the two]. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Furthermore, since one of them [i.e. the Light or Dark gods of Dualism] does not have the ability to harm and the other does not have the ability

[436] One again al-Māturīdī devotes a chapter to refuting Dualists. We know that those who followed the Dualists ideology included the Zoroastrians, Manicheans, Marcionites etc. These groups were present in Central Asia, but their influence does not equate to the number of pages and the strongly worded writing devoted by al-Māturīdī in his refutation.

to give benefit, the grounds for hope and fear are entirely cut off, and so the use of knowing wisdom and ignorance disappear.

In addition, since each of the substances operate based on nature, then gaining knowledge [of Light and Dark] through wisdom and ignorance based on nature is impossible. [The definition of] wisdom is putting everything in its rightful place, and ignorance is putting everything out of place. It is not possible to apply this description to something with a nature since it has a Free Will. According to their position, Light does not know what benightedness is in order to warn from it, and Darkness does not know what wisdom is. Ignorance of the somethingness and the condition of the thing is evil. Therefore, according to them, knowledge and benightedness are contained within the essence of Light, and [as such so is] ability and inability, in that it cannot dispel ignorance from itself nor can it prevent Darkness from harming it. Then, according to them, the essence of Good is that it is mixed with Evil, and the essence of Darkness is that there is no Good in it, which means that according to them Evil necessarily prevails over Good. If that which is Good does not know Evil and foolishness, how is it that what emerged from the essence of Good, after Evil overcame it, knows Good and Evil?

However, anything with a nature is subjugated, since it is unable to go against the nature that compels it [to act in a specific way] or [against the nature] that compels the contrary. In this lies a subjugating control that makes one thing good by nature and another thing evil. If a thing is reduced to two things that possess what is in these two things, such as heating and cooling, there must be a being who made them this way. This results in the proposition that this being is One.

Furthermore, whomsoever argues that each one of the two is a powerful creator, then it becomes necessary that each one of the two knows how to prevent the other from functioning and is able to do so, or it does not

know [how to prevent the other from functioning] and is unable to do so. If it does now know or is not able, then benightedness and inability are combined in the Light, which results in the negation of the reason that they argue for two [gods], on the other hand, if it knows and is capable but then did not act to prevent [the other, i.e. Evil or Dark], then the description of evil is applied to it.

Then it becomes necessary that Light either opposes the Darkness or it does not, and it [either] enjoys being conjoined with it, or it does not. If it does not oppose Darkness and enjoys being mingled with it, then that is evil, because not being hostile to the [evil] enemy and having affection for it is evil. On the other hand, if it opposes and hates Darkness, then hostility and hatred in the present Universe are evil. If they argue that this is only the case with the present Universe due to a mixture of conditions, the same is the case in all the wisdom they deny in the creation of the two types. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Furthermore, it must be recognised in the present Universe that there is knowledge after benightedness, beneficence after offense, regret after sin, and acknowledgement of offense after understanding, as well as belief that a thing is true after belief that it was false, because of the existence [of such things] in the present Universe. Therefore, we can either make it so that the both of them come from Light, which would mean that offence, sin, and ignorance come from it, which in that case would negate the belief of two [gods], or it can be that offence, ignorance and benightedness come from Darkness and recognition, beneficence and regret come from Light, such that this is falsehood, partisanship and preoccupation [with a false opinion]. According to this sect, all this is from the act of Darkness, as it has expounded it for Light, then avowing what is not is falsehood and ignorance. Or it is that both of them are from Darkness, meaning that both good and evil come from it.

Furthermore, it is necessary that it [Light] is [either] concerned about the evil that befalls its friends and it grieves over it, or it does not. If it is preoccupied and grieves, then the argument that [the Light contains] all that is delightful and joyful is nullified. On the other hand, if it does [grieve or is not preoccupied], then the argument that acts of evil and harm are cruelty and severity, not mercy, is nullified. This is the result of arguing in support of two [gods]. Then it is asked that does Light want or not motion after being at rest, and does it want something [to appear] and then it does not appear, and love something and then hate it? Our position on this is what we have mentioned in the earlier chapters. *God is the grantor of success.*

In everything we opposed in terms of differing and contradictory conditions, the Dualists claimed that this is the way of the present Universe due to the mixing of the Darkness into the essence of Light, so that things are seen in other than their [true] form, and through this the transmission of the knowledge of things takes place.

It is said that it is not wisdom or mercy that keeps your claim from being the case, instead, it is ignorance and cruelty which are the afflictions of Darkness being mixed into you which prevents you from seeing everything in its essence and form. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Furthermore, since God is powerful in Himself, and there is nothing He cannot do, He is self-sufficient in that He has no need for anything, knowing in Himself and is benighted of nothing, and wise in Himself, not able to make an error in any deed, it is futile to say that His creation contains clear differences and contradictions and that there is a conflict in the design [of the Universe]. Instead, it must be said of all things when reason cannot comprehend their wisdom after it has been established that God is the Originator and Creator of them, [that] we know within

them lies great wisdom which reason cannot comprehend. The Dualist cannot fathom that our senses were designed to recognise whatever they were [specifically] created for, even if they are unable to comprehend it, while another sensation comes along and comprehends it. It is the same case for reason, since it is created and finite, and does not surpass the finitude that was imposed on it. In everything that exists, there is unseemliness in everything that appears seemly, and corruption in everything that appears upright. So it stands established that perhaps [reason] is afflicted by something that prevents it from understanding the true nature of the wisdom and foolishness that it encounters.

Furthermore, how is it that considering the purpose of wisdom by one who is needy and poor endears him to his need, makes his poverty beautiful in his own sight, and shows the appeal of unseemly things through habit and familiarity, and vice versa?[437] Therefore, to whomever it is applied, this description of his comprehension of Divine Wisdom and related afflictions, [he] is unable to originate an act which is not from a thing, since he acts by the ability of his own limbs and uses instruments.

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[437] Al-Māturīdī is arguing that all things are based on God's Divine Wisdom. In most cases, the wisdom is obvious and easy to comprehend, for example the wisdom of a good act resulting in something positive such as a reward. However, there are acts where the wisdom requires contemplation, such as in the case of the existence of certain evils. Based on inquiry into each individual case, a person can come to the realisation that certain situations exist in order to test people, or for some other potential benefit. But there are issues where a persons' limitations preclude comprehension. This does not mean that there is no wisdom behind them - instead according to al-Māturīdī, it is the person who is unable to comprehend it, despite the fact that everything entails God's Wisdom. Therefore, if one appreciates this, then one who is poor understands that the beauty of poverty lies in the fact that all things are based on God's Divine Wisdom. For example, it could be that a person is being tested by God to see how they deal with their poverty, or God is in fact helping such a person because with wealth he may have committed many abhorrent acts.

[438] So how is that someone whose basis of action is such, after he has come to realise that he acts using a power that was created and with knowledge that was transmitted [to him], how can he assume judgement of inability and ignorance over One who is all-powerful in Himself, knowing that a [created] being is unable and ignorant [to do the same]. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

In terms of the refutation of [the Dualists] that were mentioned in the first chapter, it should be said to them: 'Is the Light safe from the Darkness if [Darkness] harms [Light] by removing itself from it and [Light] prevents [Darkness] from this occurrence?' If he replies 'no', he admits his ignorance, since the ignorant person did the same in the issue related to the present Universe. On the other hand if he replies 'yes', then he imposes [on Light] something that his essence cannot endure, and in that case, he is ignorant. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

[438] This is a very important point in regard to the issues of belief and disbelief in Islamic theology, which can have an impact on real world issues such as cloning and other pioneering scientific advancements. Those who believe in God argue that it is only God that can create something out of nothing and that created beings are unable to do so. But if one was to utilise a created substance to create something, then that is not creating something out of nothing *(Creatio Ex Nihilo)* and does not constitute disbelief. Hence, using a created substance or instrument in order to create something else is not an issue of disbelief and nor does it cause any problems for Theists - although many Muslims and other Theists seem confused as to this point.

Refutation of Naturalism[439]

Meanwhile, according to the Naturalists, 'nature' is a subjugated thing that cannot remove itself from what is in its nature, but something that is without a nature can prevent it from causation. Therefore, it stands established that its action upon another thing is without effect, since it may [itself] be prevented from acting by something else. It performing an action by itself is not possible as long as it remains itself. In addition, since it cannot refrain from an act, this proves that it is subjugated under a knowledgeable, subduing being.

Furthermore, anything with a nature does not act upon anything through its nature unless that other thing has been created to receive it. For example, something that cannot be harmed will not be harmed by an act that is harmful to something else, and similarly with acts that cause pleasure and pain. It is the same way in the case of dyes. The action of nature is not such as to make [another] thing accept its nature or change or be affected by it, which proves the existence of a being without natures [i.e. God]. In addition, if a thing with a nature were separated from its action, it would neither compose nor form, so the existence [of elements of the Universe] prove that something else is their originator.

Moreover, if dyes were separated from the colouring of things, it would turn out flawed and ugly. On the other hand, such a thing is permissible for a wise, knowledgeable being who puts everything in its rightful place, and it is the same case regarding the effect of nature. In terms of nature,

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[439] Once again, al-Māturīdī has devoted a significant portion of this book to his refutation of naturalists. In terms of naturalists, there wasn't a specific sect of naturalists but instead this was a belief held within many religions and localities. For example, within Islam there were some *Mutazalites* who were naturalists and some who held a Deistic worldview.

this is, even more, the case, since [its parts] are incompatible and mutually repel one another, or degrade things without limit, and admit corruption. Therefore, the harmony and perpetuity within substances signify that there is a knowledgeable, subduing being that amalgamated them and forced them together. Furthermore, each amalgamation of natures has something causing [them to amalgamate] which is not of them - and this necessarily proves the existence [of these natures]. And there are many [things] of the same ilk. We may find heat rising by its very nature and coldness falling, and [yet] they [can] both exist in the same body, which is proof that this phenomenon has a subduing, knowledgeable designer.

To respond to those who argue for the eternity of substances, we find that substances are not devoid of accidents. We reject this position [of substances being eternal] for several reasons. The first reason is that eternity is devoid [of accidents], and this involves rejecting the testimony of our own eyes. The second reason is that there are many substances and they originate for a number [of different] periods of time, and they are parts of the whole in that they endure the accidents that the whole endures. Therefore, it is necessary to argue that they are created. It is not possible to argue that they were dormant and became apparent or separated and amalgamated, because this would prove something other than the judgment of our observation. If this were possible, even if it removed the possibility of knowledge, this would mean it was possible for the Universe to be created from nothing, even if its existence was removed from a person's imagination of the evidence. In addition, dormancy is not possible because it converts the existence of one thing into space for ten things like it. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Furthermore, substances and their attributes are not devoid of forms, and so are not without a designer, just like the other things whose essence and attributes can be sensed. They do not subside in themselves but instead through a Sustainer, and as such it is impossible for them to be eternal. Moreover, since it is known that everything is incapable and benighted of its own conditions and what is suitable for it, this is proof of the entirety [needing a Designer] - among the other proofs that were mentioned [previously].[440] *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Therefore it is necessary to ascribe to the Creator omnipotence and beneficence in pre-eternity, as well as creating, so that everything is as it was from pre-eternity, provided that eternity is not applied to everything that existed through God - because [creation] is a type of annihilation, and it is impossible to say that God was brought into existence, since God exists in Himself. Moreover, everything is as it was in the sense that substances are not devoid of accidents, which were brought into being by [God's] omnipotence and generosity. Then they returned to accidents as was possible, and it is the same case for all substances. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Furthermore, if everything were pre-eternal, the attribution of power and action would no longer apply to God in terms of temporally created things. Instead, God's creation is that He creates everything as He knows it to be, and desires a creation that does not cease to possess attributes, since He is above being affected by attributes, such that He makes everything within the Universe, which includes the things within it that signify that they were created, and that is the design of the Creator. *God is the grantor of success.*

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[440] The supplication was moved to the end of the paragraph

Approaches to Monotheism

[Shaykh] Abū Manṣūr stated: In support of the position of monotheism from a different perspective is the argument of the *Dahrīya* [441] who despite their differences argued for one Creator and the [existence of] pre-eternal Prime Matter or *Hayūla*, which is one until it is affected by accidents and transforms from its initial state.

The Dualists argue that the wise, merciful, knowledgeable being is one [meaning the Light], and the existence of the other [namely, Darkness] does not mean it is Divine, but rather the contrary, since it is all that is ignorance and evil.

The followers of other religions argue for the pre-eternity of the One, even if one sect of them argues that He was later incarnated and another sect that He has a son. Despite their differences, they agree that God is One etc. and that He has nothing like Him. This is impossible, since there was nothing other than Him [in pre-eternity] and the basis for similarity is the existence of what is other than Him in creation, which is impossible. This is the meaning of 'the One', since God is one in His sublimity and glory, and one in essence, free from there being something like Him in His Essence, since as we have explained this negates monotheism. He is also One in relation to attributes and is beyond anyone being able to share the reality of His Attributes such as

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[441] The *Dahrīya* are another group that al-Māturīdī has devoted a significant amount of his book in order to refute. Once again, there is no one specific group of '*Dahrīya*' but instead it is a belief that was held by many groups from a range of sects and religions. The term '*Dahrīya*' comes from the word '*Dahr*', which refers to time without beginning. It was used to refer to those people who argued for the pre-eternity of the Universe and hence it included Muslim groups such as the *Mutazalites* as well as non-Muslims such as the followers of Aristotle.

Knowledge, Power and Creation. In fact, whenever something other than Him is described with these attributes, it is after such thing did not exist previously, and it is impossible for that which is originated to resemble the [pre-] eternal. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Shaykh Abū Manṣūr said that God granted all people who possess reason to believe in monotheism in its totality, but each of the sects rejected parts of what was granted to them based on [their] interpretation, except for Muslims, who followed what was granted to them [by God]. An example of this is the *Dahrīya,* who argue for [the existence] of a Creator as well as the pre-eternity of the Creator, but then place all created substances in conjunction with Him in pre-eternity, which results in the invalidation of monotheism. Then there are the *Bāṭiniyyah* who argue for the existence of Prime Matter and *Hayūla*, and make them one, [and they say] then [raw, Primal Matter] was annihilated through the process of transition and annihilation from which numberless things come into existence.

The Dualists who argue for the knowledgeable One believe that He is of one category, since they make all that is good come from Him. This is also the position of the Manicheans, heretics and Magians etc. They negate their monotheism by arguing for [God being] a body, since it is a term that can become many. The Jews made creation similar to God, as they multiplied His number, to the point that they claimed He could have a child.[442]

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[442] The basis of this issue lies in the following verse of the Holy Quran, *"The Jews say, 'Uzayr is the son of God'; and the Christians say, 'The Messiah is the son of God.' That is their statement from their mouths; they imitate the saying of those who disbelieved [before them]."* (Quran, Surah *At-Tawbah* (9:30)). It seems that this was Al-Māturīdī's sole reference pertaining to Judaism - most likely due to his lack of interaction with Jews, as he was living in Transoxiana. This has left many Muslims confused, because there is no current sect of Jews who hold that Uzayr is the son of God. Many scholars have opined on the issue.

The Christians argue that [God is] one entity and three hypostases, and each hypostasis excludes partiality and dimension. They also argue that He was incorporeal and then became corporeal, while it is known that bodies are forms which are divisible and can be partitioned.[443]

For example, Al-Jahiz argued that this was a belief held by a sect of Jews that lived in Arabia, but the sect died out. Ibn Hazm (d. 312/1064) argued that there was a group of Jews in Yemen who held this position. Al-Māturīdī himself in his '*Tafsīr*', argues that earlier groups of Jews from Arabia held this belief, but once the Prophet Muhammad began his mission they stopped espousing this in order to hide it, and those who came after no longer had this belief (he also claims that both Jews and Christians were imitating an earlier, no longer extant group in Arabia). This was also the explanation by Fakhr al-Din al-Razi and Tabari. The problem is that there is no historical evidence supporting these explanations. As many historians have argued, the only historical evidence that lends to this statement is the Quran itself. Hence, I do not believe that this is the best explanation (although those who hold it can argue that there is a possibility that there *was* such a group of Jews, even if they no longer exist. In support of their opinion they could cite as an example the 'Dead Sea Scroll' fragment called 'The Son of God' (4Q246), which is pre-Christian). Rather, when one analyses a following verse, an indication is provided as to the intended meaning: "*They have taken their scholars and monks as lords besides God, and [also] the Messiah, the son of Mary.*" (Quran, Surah At-Tawbah (9:31)).I hold the view that these verses are linked because the first verse states that "*The Jews say, 'Uzayr is the son of God*" and the next verse says; "*They have taken their scholars and monks as lords besides God*". Analysing holistically, it means that Uzayr was a Jewish scholar (a Rabbi) who his followers revered to the extent that they began to 'worship' him. This does not necessarily mean that they hold Uzayr as a direct partner to God, but rather that they followed him blindly to the point that they took his word over the word of God. This verse would then be a lesson to us to not make the same mistake *vis a vis* the veneration of scholars - something that can be observed amongst Muslims, where some hold that the Quran can be 'abrogated' by transmissions or *hadiths* that have been authenticated by scholars, or where a person without realising ignores the word of God for what is propagated by scholars.

[443] This can be found in the following Quranic verse *"So believe in Allah and His messengers. And do not say, 'Three'"* (Quran, Surah *An-Nisa* (4:171)) as well as other verses.

The naturalists did not require the natures to operate of themselves so that there is someone who amalgamates and separates them, who according to their position exists pre-eternally.

The *Mutazalites,* who claim monotheism, argue that there are things in [a state of] non-existence, and to the term 'non-existence', pre-eternity [is applied] in the same manner as [real] things. So according to their argument, monotheism is negated in the same manner that we explained in reference to the *Dahrīya's* argument for the pre-eternity of the Universe. This is because according to them, God was not the creator, not merciful and not compassionate, and then became so by bringing things into existence. This is the same as the Dualists who argued for the variance in essence [of Good and Evil] and then [the occurrence] of mixing, and this is what the propagators of [the teachings of] Prime Matter and *Hayūla* argue - that God was in a specific state, and then entered into a state where attributed [things] came into existence. However, their argument is stronger based on reason than that proposed by the *Mutazalites*, since they made change necessary through accidents in the Prime Matter, while [*Mutazalites*] did it through something other than God.[444] But in the present Universe, no one changes from what he is in a way that is not permissible for him. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

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[444] The *Mutazalites,* who do not believe that the Universe was *Creatio ex Nihilo* and instead propagate its pre-eternity, hold that the Universe emerged from primal matter and God is the reason for the creation of everything. Furthermore, the *Mutazalites* do not in fact believe that God did not have attributes and then they came into existence when God created as Al Māturīdī states, instead they reject the attributes totally. The reason they reject them is in fact for this same reason - that if you believe that God is enacting an attribute it indicates a change in God, because God was first not creating and then He was creating.

Al-Hussayn [al-Najjar], Al-Buruguth and others were of this second opinion, and they linked change to space.[445] They said that God existed and there was no space, but then they described God by all space [meaning that God is everywhere]. Thus, they made the existence of God contingent on something created, which negates the position of monotheism.

The Anthropomorphists say that there are things in creation which are like God, in having a body, finitude, limit, motion and rest. They ascribe to God the properties of the created things of the Universe, and they make it, so that [these created things] are like God. But God is beyond such ascriptions.

Those who believe in monotheism argue that God is One in His Essence, He does not have a need for the ones and is above the meaning of the ones, i.e. from what requires the attribute of number, which allows for change, evanescence, limits and finitude. Instead, His Attributes are pre-eternity, Creation and Power. His Glory and Divinity are beyond any ascription of change and evanescence. *All praise is to God in every case.*

There is disagreement amongst the *Dahrīya* who hold three different positions. [The first] is separation and then amalgamation, which is the position of heretics and Dualists, who are proponents of Light and Darkness. [The second] is amalgamation and then separation, which is the position of those who argue for the Prime Matter and *Hayūla.* [The third] is the benightedness of both [amalgamation and separation] in their argument for pre-eternity, which is also the teaching of the Naturalists, although they have not explicitly argued [for this dogma]. Then there is the position that amalgamation and separation do not exist

[445] As explained previously al-Buruguth was a follower of al-Najjar and propagated his ideas until the school ceased to exist.

and that the state of the Universe applies to both, which is the teaching of those who argue for the pre-eternity of created substances with accidents that have no beginning.

The argument of those who differentiate between these two states is clearly contradictory, because it requires one of the two - either amalgamation or separation, to apply to God Himself, since they describe these states as pre-eternal. Then [this state] must have departed from God without God Himself departing, so the state He was in became nullified along with the cause that made it exist, which is the existence of the cause that brings the thing into existence in the case of its elimination, which is flawed reasoning. If this were possible, then that would mean it was possible for the eternal to be originated and the originated to be eternal, which would negate their argument *vis-a-vis* pre-eternity.

If it were possible for something which endures in itself to cease to exist, and what ceases to exist in itself to endure, then it would be possible for something which exists in itself to be non-existent and for something which does not exist in itself to exist. This then has two aspects. The first is the coming into being of the Universe after it was not, and its existence after its non-existence.[446] Here lies the confusion of their school and it requires one to admit that the Universe was originated without any foundation to it. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

The second aspect is that if it was [possible for] something which was amalgamated in itself to be separated and something which is separated in itself to be amalgamated without being created, then it would be

[446] The first is coming into being after it was not, which does not necessarily mean that the Universe came from nothing - for example the Universe could have come from *Hayūla.* The second is coming into existence after non-existence (*Creatio ex Nihilo*).

possible for something which is amalgamated to be separated while at the same time being amalgamated, since its essence is subsisting, and this is something reason is unable to comprehend. Hence, knowledge of other things ceases to exist - since there is no knowledge which is more cogent than what I have mentioned. This would also permit making evil good, darkness light, the living dead, the moving still, the cold hot etc. with other contradictions. When one allows this, it invalidates the argument for the pre-eternity of amalgamation and separation, since they were together, and thus invalidates the argument for time without beginning. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

[Shaykh] Abū Manṣūr said that the basis for this is that the separation can only be because of nature, free will, or through another who created them this way, and the same applies to amalgamation. As such, separation and amalgamation do not go beyond what we have mentioned. If [amalgamation and separation] were because of nature, it would be necessary that anything whose foundation is amalgamation and separation would increase [in amalgamation and separation]. Is it not obvious that anything that is in motion in nature increases in its motion, and it requires this [to be the case]? It is the same case for any substance that rises by nature and whose position is above [in relation to] a substance that sinks by nature, it is impossible for them to ever unite [except by intervention from God, i.e. against their natures].[447] The same principle applies to something that moves from the right and something that moves from the left; this results in the negation of their claims.

On the other hand, if [the occurrence] is because of free will, the notion that they were in a state other than what they are is not valid, because there is no evidence proving the contrary of what we observe in the

[447] If the position of object A is located above object B, and object A continues to rise whereas object B continues to sink, then these two objects will never meet.

present Universe, namely that amalgamation can be affected by something that chooses separation or separation can be affected by something that chooses amalgamation, since otherwise free will is nullified. This results in the falsification of their position that everything is in perpetuity and remains in the essence of the other. The confirmation of this is that the retention of good in evil is evil, whereas if they possessed free will, each one would not be devoid of the ability to prevent the other from its act, and they would each have free will and knowledge of how to do that. But if they did not [have this ability], this would negate the possibility of free will, and both would be characterized by inability and benightedness. If that were the case, the difference from the state that they were in would be nullified, since as a result each of them would attain that which harms and penetrates it. Furthermore, apprehending [the difference between Light and Dark] involves making each benighted and incapable of affecting the other, which results in the nullification of the argument. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

If this were in another thing that signified that dispersion and separation are originated and [the Universe is] not free from such a thing, then it is necessary that [dispersion and separation] are originated. This results in the affirmation of monotheism by which I wish to refute [their beliefs]. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

In terms of both [amalgamation and separation], they acknowledged that there is no substantial argument to deal with, and it is among the things that reason cannot comprehend. Instead, their method is deferring to authority, so the matter became doubtful to them due to the differences in what it leads to. So instead, they spoke of what they were sure of and assumed that what it leads to is a truth that is apparent, that is part of that truth.

Since it is impossible to unite the two things with respect to the contradiction that we explained, this proves that the truth, if it lies in the argument of the *Dahrīya*, lies in one of the two claims, but we have shown that both these assertions are flawed. *Allah is the one who supports.*

The Views of Muhammad ibn Shabib on the Existence and Attributes of the Creator

On this [issue], Muhammad ibn Shabib[448] made an argument which can be summarised as follows: since the existing [Universe], with the opposites and contradictions that it contains, cannot avoid being that way pre-eternally, therefore its existence is nullified, in that it is not conceivable for a thing to exist out of the whole, unless a thing exists within the whole. In this manner, each existent [of the whole] prevents the existence [of a thing within it] and as such it is nullified. It is like when someone says that no one can enter this house until someone else enters - and so it is not possible for the entry of anyone into the house to satisfy this condition. On the other hand, if it was from separation that preceded it, then existence would be void due to the opposite, since its reality is mutual repulsion because they are opposed by nature, and if the result of the contradiction is what I have mentioned. Also, based on free will it were possible to remove their natures which contain contradiction, then this would mean that each of them could freely choose annihilation of itself in itself, despite the fact that by nature they are in perpetuity. If both ways are nullified, then it signifies that it existed after it did not exist through a being that originated it in this manner with the difference and similarity that it contains. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

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[448] Muhammad ibn Shabib was from Basra and was the student of An-Nazzam, a famous scholar who follows the school of the *Mutazalites*. He was an independent scholar, whose views were a mix of those held by the *Murji'a* and those held by the *Mutazalites*. This is probably the reason why Al-Māturīdī is willing to openly express his agreement with Muhammad ibn Shabib on certain issues within the book.

Then it is not possible to come into existence without a creator, because for God non-existence and existence are one, and because a form is not known without a designer, and seasons do not change [on their own] such as from Winter to Summer. Hence, this also proves that a being created them.

There was an objection that: if what prevents that which exists in itself from this [need for a creator] is that it exists in time which is outside of time[449] then why could this also not be the case for something that is other than it? [Muhammed ibn Shabib] claimed that if something other [than God] could direct its own existence, it would have [its own] religion and Universe, but this is not the case for things that do not exist through themselves. Therefore, the two situations are different.

Furthermore, his claim entails that it is not possible [for God] to have created the first creation, other than something [being created] so that it can be tested [by God], so that it exists in the way we have mentioned. Since it is possible for something other than [this creation to have been created], without there being an advantage to the time that was without [the creation], and as such there is no substance to his statement. We ourselves have expounded the argument for creation, and the impossibility of the question 'why did He create?' We cannot assert that God only does the most optimum thing, since the reality of the act adheres to God, such that the description of blame applies to God if He [decides] to postpone [His act] or enacts [His act] earlier but in reality

[449] Muhammad ibn Shabib is explaining that if someone were to make the weak argument that something that exists in a time outside of time does not need a creator, then this is a fallacy, because this could then be applied to anything, as there is no such thing as a 'time outside of time'.

the act of God does not deviate from wisdom.[450] However, considering the [application of] the most optimum [acts] for something other than God, [then in relation to this application] what should be considered is its right over God as opposed to [the consideration of] the act itself.

Furthermore, it is impossible for something other than God to have a right over God and not [to have a right] over another, or to ask about the [the reason for creating the] whole of creation. Therefore, to posit that God creates for their benefit and what is suitable for them is meaningless, since there is no harm or corruption for them in that which God does not create for them, such that creation would be as mentioned. *God knows best.*

Then in the whole, there is not a creation which is placed under the test, which does not have benefit and instruction, by way of inference and consideration, besides the other benefits that God bestows on them. *God is the grantor of success.*

On the other hand, the righteousness and corruption of a person in religion are through his [own] action. God has reasons for which the righteous act attains the greatest favours and most profuse blessings. Whoever falls into corruption because he turns away from God and prefers his desires over obedience to God, [then] God gives him free rein with what he chooses for himself, since he preferred his own caprice over God's command, his own desire over obedience to God, and preferred the act that he knew was hostile [to God as opposed] to the act that he knew would be friendship [with God]. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

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[450] This is an example of Muhammed ibn Shabib following the *Mutazalites* opinion of God creating the most optimum things, which al-Māturīdī rejects and presents his own opinion - that the acts of God cannot be detached from wisdom.

It is an objection to the beginning of creation that God creates for Himself, and there is no advantage. [Muhammad ibn Shabib] claimed that there is no time that existed when it could be said; 'Why did He not create before?'[451] However, whenever it is [created], God is first, and the best in design and first in wisdom, and so on. So this raises the question: 'Why did He not create something superior to Him in wisdom and sound direction?'

[Shaykh] Abū Manŝūr stated that what [Muhammad ibn Shabib said] concerning time is like [our position]. However the question posed about matter being similar is invalid, because there is no reference to a time, unless it is creation before then to the point that the tongue cannot express due to the number of times that are possible, and this invalidates the question. Except in the case of pre-eternity, and that is a contradiction, due to the impossibility of creation occurring to a being that exists pre-eternally. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God*

What [Muhammad ibn Shabib] mentioned in terms of wisdom is accurate, but I do not know [the point] he was attempting to make concerning the optimum. What [Muhammad ibn Shabib] said regarding the point about 'above Him' or 'like Him' are meaningless arguments.[452]

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[451] This is the position held by Muhammad ibn Shabib and the *Mutazalites,* which is that God has created the Universe at the most optimum time and there is no other time that was better for God creating Universe than this time. Al-Māturīdī responds that whenever the Universe was created, it still means that God is the first in His uniqueness and His acts are never without wisdom. Therefore, the issue of the time that the Universe was created being the most optimum is irrelevant.

[452] Al-Māturīdī is clearly referring to the ideas that are presented in the works of Muhammad ibn Shabib. These books have not survived and therefore we have no way of presenting his original premises. J. Meric Pessagno has attempted to recreate his thought in his paper titled '*The Reconstructing of the Thought of Muhammad ibn Shabib*', where he uses the points relayed by al-Māturīdī in this book as well as those positions relayed by Ibn al-Murtada, al-'Ash'arī, al-Baghdadi and al-Shahrastani.

God may perform any act that does not deviate from wisdom, since such deviation results in ignorance and that contravenes Divinity. Furthermore, in terms of 'wisdom', then it is of two modes. One is justice, and the other is favour. There is no end to the favour that God can bestow, such that it could be said of a thing that it is the best act that God's Might can attain.

Moreover, God is not bound to bestow favour, but rather allocates it to whomever He wishes. It is not possible for God's action to deviate from wisdom, for the reason that we have mentioned. The same applies to the meaning of 'justice', which is putting everything in its rightful place. However, there are degrees by which an act may be described as benevolent and gracious, or as just and wise, since they are both common names for any act a [person] may perform, and the first is particular in respect to the fact that God could leave it aside and make it gracious and beneficent. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

The question pertaining to creating a thing before this creation circumvents what we have explained in regards to time. *God is capable of all things.*

Then there was an objection, as to why God was not ceaselessly creating things?[453] He responded with the argument mentioned above, that it is defective to claim that a thing can exist before another thing into pre-eternity.

[Shaykh] Abū Manṣūr explained that our response [to this issue] is as follows: If by 'not ceaselessly creating things,' you mean that [these things] do not cease, that is impossible, because that would prove they

[453] Here is referring to the argument that God is continuously creating pre-eternally. Therefore, what can be seen is that al-Māturīdī does not profess to the position of occasionalism. This can be seen by him relaying Muhammad ibn Shabib refutation of the position.

are pre-eternal, and if they were pre-eternal, that would contradict the fact that they were originated. On the other hand, if by this you mean 'origination', such that all things derive from it for the time of their existence, then that is true, since God is Creator in Himself, not through something else.

Now we shall mention Muhammad ibn Shabib's questions, with which he argued against the Atheists. [Muhammad ibn Shabib] objected to the [question that was posited in regards to] 'What is He that is worshipped?' to which we have clarified the response. He claims that this [creation] bears attributes like those [which are ascribed to God – incorrectly in ibn Shahib's opinion], while we have explained that there is nothing that is similar to God, and that God bears the attributes by which He is referred to.[454] We did not come to know [God] through the senses such as to refer to Him [in a manner that bears similarity to creation]. Furthermore, [the question] 'What is He?' means that God existed beforehand [before the senses can point to Him] through evidence and the observation of the Universe. [In terms of] 'What is He?', this is that which is stated by God's name such as God, the Merciful, the Compassionate etc.

We respond that He is the One God, and nothing is similar to Him. With the Universe, we preclude returning to the question, because it concerns something that cannot be comprehended [by reason], and this entails that the question is rejected except with regards to the existence of evidence. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

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[454] Al-Māturīdī is referring to the *Mutazalites* teaching that is also held by Muhammad ibn Shabib, namely the denial of the Attributes of God. One of the reasons for the denial of attributes is that it is ascribing attributes to God which results in likening God to the creation. Al-Māturīdī is attempting to argue that such a presumption is flawed unless you consider creation to be similar to God.

Then with regards to the question, 'What is He?' [Muhammad ibn Shabib] responded that God is in things, designing them, not in the sense of indwelling in the way that it is said 'so-and-so is in his work' and [Muhammad ibn Shabib] also] said not in the sense that things encompass God.

[Shaykh] Abū Manṣūr said that [Muhammad ibn Shabib] erred in his response, because the true [response] is that when you ask about place, then [the answer to this is that] God existed without place, and He is above being described by places. God is as He was, without change or becoming evanescent. By saying that God is in work, it is using a conventional expression about work occupying God or God being confined in it by something else, and God is above such a description.

Furthermore, when it was said to [Muhammad ibn Shabib] that, 'if you deny that God resembles His creation, and that His creation resembles Him, then you are guilty of likening God to His creation.' He responded that there is no likening in denial. Do you not see that when someone says: 'He is like black and white, in that the one does not resemble the other,' this does not entail resemblance, but instead it is said by way of presenting proof [of the denial of their similarity]?

[Al-Māturīdī explained] that [Muhammad ibn Shabib] made a good [point], and if there was [an invocation of] similarity, it was in his saying that 'this resembles that' entails the contrary, and this involves transposing the realities and nullifying the figurative expression entirely. The totality of this is that refutation removes the refuted thing from the imagination and the intellect, and if it is removed, [the imagination and the intellect] do not appraise it. 'Similarity' is the reality under a degree of an essence, attribute or extent. Therefore, its meaning is void.

It is in the same manner that it is a response to those who claim that 'If you do not describe God by place, you have delimited Him in extent.

Extent is the terminus of the place, and it is impossible to deny delimitation in describing God [by place], and it is the same case with places.' Instead, the one who argues for [God being] everywhere or for [in] a place without place is the one who delimits God, since he affirms God in the way that he affirmed the location that is ascribed [to God], which the intellect and imagination appraise. This involves delimitation and likening. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God*

Furthermore, [Muhammad ibn Shabib] then responded to the question, 'How did God create creation?' in the following way: If the question treats of the act, it is impossible. God originated and created its substance, and there is no way to treat it. If the question means 'Which thing did He create?' It refers to corporeal substances such as the sky and so on, since creating the thing, in this claim, is that thing. If the question means 'Why did He create?' [The answer is that it is for] the benefit of creation in their religion and what is best for them as God ordained for them.

[Shaykh] Abū Manṣūr explained that the response to this question is to reject it on the grounds that there is no 'how' in God's action, since everything with a "how" is something with similarities. There is a disagreement in terms of the existence of creation being a thing that is from God or from other than God. Some of them argue that it is from God [and this was the position of Muhammad ibn Shabib][455] and asking for God's method [in creating] is defective, since God is not [similar to] His creation such as to be likened to it. Others say that creating things is God's Attribute that is attributed to Him pre-eternally, therefore

[455] He is referring to the difference between the belief held by Muhammad ibn Shabib who held that existence of creation is because of God and those who don't believe in God and held that the Universe came from Prime Matter.

asking about 'how' involves asking about His Essence, His Knowledge and His Power, and that is a flawed [question].[456]

Furthermore, moving on to the question, 'Did God create things from a thing or from nothing?', Ibn Shabib responded that it is 'from nothing', meaning that God devised things or originated them without a foundation. This is as he related concerning the origination of bodies. However, the *Mutazalites* teaching is that the 'somethingness' of things was not through God, but their existence was through Him, so in their opinion, creating things from nothing is impossible. Instead, God did not create things but rather brought into existence their corporeal substances out of non-existence. This is among the various reasons for the [flaw in the] analogies of the *Mutazalites*, and we thank God that we are preserved from these [errors].[457]

His response to the question ['Why did God create the Universe?'] is strange. It is that 'God created for the benefit of creation', because when he was asked 'why did God create the Universe?' he replied; 'for the benefit of creation.' And why did he create for the benefit of creation, and what need was there for creation, when there was no creation to create creation for its own benefit? If it could be said that 'He created creation for their benefit without a need for creation that has been proven,' how did God not create for His own benefit, even if there was no need for it? According to the position of the *Mutazalites*, this is prior, because God was not creative or merciful or compassionate. In their

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[456] The issue of not applying *'kayf'* ('how') to God is something for which the school of Māturīdī became well known. It was an idea adopted by the *'Ash'arī* School as well.
[457] Here al-Māturīdī is referring to an issue he has relayed several times in the book regarding the *Mutazalites* teaching that a non-existent thing is still a 'thing'. You can read about it the issue the last time it was discussed in the chapter titled; '*Against the Thesis: That which is Non-Existent (Ma'dum) Has Always Existed*,' which can be found on page 185.

view, these are names of magnification and praise as if God benefited from creation, since God was not such in Himself and then became such through His creation. But God is above attributes of need and benefit. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

[Shaykh] Abū Manṣūr contended that the argument of [Muhammad ibn Shabib] is that 'creation of the thing is the thing'. Therefore, the thing is in God's Essence or its own essence. Since nothing proceeds from God except Himself and nothing proceeds to creation from God other than creation in itself, so how did God become a creator when nothing other than creation proceeded from Him, without creation being anything else? In addition, why is it not correct [to state] that 'why was creation not in the fact that God is a creator?', since nothing proceeded from God to it other than the fact that God was [in pre-eternity]. The pre-eternity of a thing does not require the existence of another thing through it. If that through which a thing exists does not proceed from it, to it, in the seen [Universe] then how is this required in the unseen [Universe]?

[Muhammad ibn Shabib's] response to [the question], 'How did He create?' is that 'He did not create through treatment' and what he mentioned is meaningless disputation. If he held that creating the thing is the thing, then let him mention that thing in his response rather than divide the question and then remove from it the concept of 'how'. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Furthermore, to those who objected and argued that if it is possible to say that 'He is unceasingly Knowledgeable, Hearing and Seeing', then why can you not say that 'He is unceasingly Creator?' [Muhammed ibn Shabib] responded that this requires creation in pre-eternity. In addition, [the statement] 'He is unceasingly Hearing' means the negation of deafness, and it is the same case for 'Knowing' and 'Seeing'.

[Muhammad ibn Shabib] claims that [his position] is that he says that 'He is unceasingly the Creator" and not 'creating' for the reasons that have been stated.[458]

[Shaykh] Abū Manṣūr said that the meaning of the saying 'He is unceasingly Hearing, Seeing and Knowing' is that God is not ignorant, or blind, or deaf [and] stating this [viewpoint] would be better if it would keep [one from having] doubt. [This is because] it could be said of a thing that; 'it is not benighted, or incapable or deaf,' and it is not necessary to describe it as 'capable, knowing, hearing, seeing.' If there were nothing in [the expression of the Attributes] other than negation of what is said, then the expression of negation is more accurate than an expression that leads to an understanding of something for which there is no use in understanding, and especially [when such an understanding results in] all [types of] harms. If its sole purpose was the negation of the opposites, then it should be said that 'God is correct, sound, healthy' in negation of the opposites without doing what was discussed [in terms of likening God to creation]. If that is not possible, it is obvious that the clarity that is claimed by [Muhammad ibn Shabib] turns out to be erroneous.[459]

Furthermore, the emergence of successive acts in good order and their precision, is evidence of knowledge and power over them, not evidence

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458 Muhammad Ibn Shabib explains that he holds the position that God is unceasingly Creator, as opposed to unceasingly creating, because the latter entails that God was continuously creating and therefore if God is pre-eternal then His creation would also be pre-eternal.

459 Here al-Māturīdī is attempting to argue that using negations as attributes, such as 'God is not deaf', should only be done when ascribing attributes to God could lead a person to think that God is similar to created things, but it should only be in that instance. If this is not the objective then it is a useless position to hold, because the foundational principle is that in normal instances it is permissible to apply attributes to God.

of one who is not ignorant and incapable, since other than one of the descriptions [applied to God], there is no act or similarity among them, as is the case with all of the Attributes. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

On the other hand, the names of the Attributes are rendered null with the negation of the Attributes. This is because [Muhammad ibn Shabib] did not verify the Attributes, the names became mere titles, and if they become that, then saying that [God] is unceasingly so-and-so is meaningless, because it is impossible for a sobriquet to exist in pre-eternity. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Therefore, since saying 'hearing, knowing, capable' does not result in everything known [being] subject to [God's] power and hearing which exists in pre-eternity, so it is the same case in saying 'the creator'. However, God is the creator of things so that they are in the state that they are in now, just as God knows them, is capable etc. This is because saying 'knowing, hearing, seeing', has the same meaning as 'the knower, the hearer, the seer', and in the same vein saying 'creator' and 'the creator' has the same meaning. Instead, stating 'the creator' is more correct since it requires the eternity of the creation, if one considers the utterance [of the word]. Is it not apparent that in the same form as "creator," it is said [in the following verse of the Holy Quran]; *'Lord of the Day of Judgement'*[460] and *"He is the Creator of all things,"*[461] and every accident and subsisting thing enters therein, and not in 'the creator,' and

[460] Quran, Surah *Al-Fatiha* (1:4)

[461] Quran, Surah *Al-An'am* (6:102)

God is not called in this way based on customary usage.[462] *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

[Shaykh] Abū Manṣūr said that the basis [of this position] is that [in terms of] God, since there is no path to knowledge of God except through indication from the knower, by cutting off the ways to attain knowledge of God through the senses or the observation of transmission, then the present Universe indicates God by way of testifying to Him by attribute and not by testifying to God's Essence, since existence after non-existence is evidence of bringing [something] into existence and creation, which the created being has knowledge of. The different states of the present Universe and the amalgamation of opposites in one thing are evidence of God's power. The effective design whose powers are with the designer, the congruence of the design and the lack of disharmony in reality in its multitude, based on reason is evidence that reason knows that which the knower makes known. Meanwhile, nothing in the sensory Universe points to an essence if the attribute is denied. It is not possible to say that it proves an essence other than [through] the verification of attributes, since that is not by that testimony which is based on observation. Likewise, those whose truthfulness is proven based on evidence[463] spoke of the Knower, the Hearer, the Seer in mentioning Knowledge, Power and so on, knowing that these names are the names of the Attributes.

Furthermore, since it is not permissible to describe by location, emergence, entry, connection, separation, in-betweenness etc. in denial

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[462] Al-Māturīdī argues that the acts of God are because of His Attributes. Thus, God knows because of His Attribute of 'Knowledge', whereas the *Mutazalites* argue that God knows by Himself and does not possess the attribute of 'knowledge'.

[463] This is referring to Prophets and the message they conveyed to the people that they were sent to.

of those states, without fixing the utterance in the mind, as is the case for dispersal, motion and rest, which is what [the *Mutazalites*] claimed is also impermissible. *God is the grantor of success.*.

[Shaykh] Abū Manŝūr said that since the origination of the Universe has been proven, and its existence after it did not exist is impossible in the state, it is by the initial things assuming the affairs of latter things and the harmony within it. It is known that God knew of this. Then the fact that it is impossible that a sense is known to God and not a sensory thing, or an analogy and not a lesson, proves that God is Knowing for Himself. In addition, the knowledge belongs to the knower Himself whether the object of knowledge is present or absent. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

[Shaykh] Abū Manŝūr said that the basis of this is as I have mentioned, that God is known not by the senses, and in that which is known is evidence of [God's] knowledge of [the Universe], since God made it in a manner that indicated this. Therefore, it is not possible that God's knowledge of it be other than Him, because there was no other until God brought it into being, then that generated thing was evidence of God. It is proven that God knew it before it existed, when there was nothing other than Him. It is proven that God knows it in its essence and not through something other than Him. *God is the grantor of success.*

Then [Muhammad ibn Shabib] asked himself about things that it is meaningless to ask about except out of stubbornness. The correct response to stubbornness is chastisement in order to prevent it, not to draw inferences from the evidence, as we explained with regards to the Sophists. [Muhammad ibn Shabib] then posited the question 'Is God not capable of all things?', to which he responded 'Yes', then he further posited 'Is God able to place the Universe inside an egg?' to which he responded that this is a contradiction, because this would make the egg

more expansive than the Universe when God has made it smaller than the Universe, as [the egg] is a part of [the Universe], which is the [very] meaning of [something being] 'bigger' and 'smaller'.

[Shaykh] Abū Manŝūr said that according to our belief, in terms of [Muhammad ibn Shabib's] response, if he meant keeping the egg as a part of the Universe, then that is impossible, because this would invert the part and the whole without a change in their state, which is a contradiction. On the other hand, if by 'egg' he meant something other than a normal egg, then there are two possible ways. One is that they both remain in their [original] state, which is impossible for the reason stated by Muhammad ibn Shabib. But if he meant shrinking [the Universe] or expanding the egg until [the Universe] fits within it, then God is capable of that. *God is the grantor of success.*

The author of the book professes to follow the *Mutazalite* School, and their teaching is that God is not able to create the acts of corporeal substances from [the level of] a mosquito and above, and the act of such a thing is a reality entirely within its power or in the power of another. They refused to verify their claim that God is capable of all things that are within the bounds of the possible according to reason.[464] So the fact

[464] This is the issue regarding the existence of bodies, which according to Sunni theologians is three-fold; necessary, possible and impossible existence. Necessary existence is split into two categories; absolute Necessary Existence, which is solely related to the existence of God, and necessary existence for the possible existence of something else. An example of this would be when a person moves an object from one location to another. For this object to have been moved it requires the existence of the person that moves it, so this person is necessary for that object to have moved but is not necessary for the continued existence of the Universe. The second is possible existence, for example an object being in one location or another location, both are possible for its existence. The third is something whose existence is impossible, such as there being a four-sided triangle or having a circle with sides. These are impossible because if something has four sides then it is not a triangle, it falls outside the bounds

that they compare an object to what falls outside the bounds of what is intellectually possible is meaningless. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Then [Muhammad ibn Shabib] asked himself [the question]; 'Is God able to create something like Himself?', to which he replied; 'That it is impossible because that makes something created a Necessary Existence, but [we know that] created beings are originated, whilst God is pre-eternal. This invalidates that such a thing would be like God. [Muhammad ibn Shabib] then also asks if God can create a being with power like His, which is similarly impossible like the former case. He also said that this also proves that a created thing, which cannot avoid being [either] a body that contains traces of its making or an accident that does not subsist in itself, indicates that it is originated, and God is not like either of the two. He then said that every created thing bears the attribute of annihilation, and God is above the occurrence of annihilation, because annihilation is not possible for God, and time is only possible for other than God, as He is the opposite of that.

[Shaykh] Abū Manṣūr said that from contemplating the above, he understood that the questioner asking this question deviated from the customs of speech that facilitate reason, because he asked 'Is He able to create something like Himself?' and a being like God would mean not being a body, an accident, or a created thing, and not a bearer of the accident of annihilation, because if it did then it would not be like God. On this point, he asked that how can that which has been mentioned

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of the definition of a triangle, which is 'a plane figure with three straight sides and three angles'. The followers of the Māturīdī School argue that God's existence is necessary, but the power of God is based on possible things i.e. God can't make a four-sided triangle or become human etc.

endure? And what was mentioned are aspects of what refute it. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Concerning the *Mutazalites*, we made clearer arguments than those [that they proposed]. Moreover, something compels them in another way, which is the fact that they describe God as being capable of falsehood, foolishness and injustice. But if such a thing were part of God, it would nullify God's Divinity, nor could God commit such an act for the same reason. Instead, they should say [according to their position] that God is able to create something like Himself, but He did not.[465] This is because the miracle [according to *Mutazalites*] is not in making the originated into the pre-eternal, [nor is it] making that which bears the attribute of annihilation not subject to annihilation, and [nor is it] making that which bears the signs of design without such signs.[466] But rather, the miracle

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[465] This is related to the previous footnote, which is the basis for answering questions such as 'can God create another God?' or the more well-known question 'can God create a stone that He cannot lift?' It is possible that God can create anything, but God's power to create is attached to the possible things, and for there to be a 'created God' is impossible, because the definition of God is 'not being created and not being an accident'. In the same vein, God can create any type of stone whose existence is possible, but there cannot be a stone that He cannot lift, because it would mean that the stone is more powerful than God and as such circumvents His Divinity. Therefore, creating a stone that God cannot lift is impossible, even for God.

[466] Al-Māturīdī is attempting to argue that following through on the *Mutazalites* opinion means that a pre-eternal Universe is nonetheless being created by God, and hence the creation of the Universe would not be a miracle. Rather, making something that is pre-eternal become originated (which is logically impossible) would be the real miracle. This is related to the view of the *Mutazalites* that God does not 'interact' with the Universe in order to enact His will, as this would mean that God was now within time, enacting His will depending on the circumstances. Instead, what is possible according to the *Mutazalites'* teaching is that God could have created things in such a way that if certain events were to occur then a created thing would act differently from its habitual nature, which would then appear to us to be a miracle but in reality was 'programmed' into its behaviour by God all along.

consists of making the eternal created, the perpetual subject to annihilation, and the wise ignorant - since if the power to do this were sound, [in terms of doing] the impossible act, then the former is like God, according to their School. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Then, according to their school, the impossible is easy, which is that God cannot come under power, so saying that something else is brought under God's power in order to become like Him is denial of that thing's similarity, due to the impossibility of God coming under power, while the other thing is affected by God's power. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

If you wanted, one could say that the question is contradictory, because he said, 'Is God able to create something like Himself?' But 'something like Himself' would not be created. So it is like saying, 'Is He able to create a being that is not like anything else?'

Furthermore, if something other than God were capable of what He is capable, that would negate God's identity, and that other thing would be He through whom is the identity of things. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

The basis of this is that the Divinity of God is proven such that God is above similitude and 'thingness', so it is impossible for something to be like Him because this would negate His Divinity.

However, the argument is contradictory, from the perspective that where it is argued that just because it was reported [by someone] that God was created, [does not mean] that this [report] caused God to be created. It is not possible for a created thing to bring about the elimination of the creator by which its [existence] was brought forth,

because this would entail its own elimination. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Therefore, according to their position [God] was not a creator and then became a creator. So, in that sense, they brought God under the [purported] power by which God became a creator. How does [Muhammad ibn Shabib] deny the possibility of a being that is not [a creator] becoming one by [God] creating him like that, just as God became [a creator] by creating something other than Him? *We turn to God for support.*

Then it was asked about God that 'was He able to create things before they were created?' [Muhammad ibn Shabib] claimed, 'Yes.' The evidence for that is that something that is incapable is prevented, so the existence of the created Universe indicates God's power to do so. If God is capable in Himself, and not through power as an accident, then God is described as having power over the Universe and innumerable similar universes.

[Shaykh] Abū Manŝūr stated that it is said of God that since He is capable in Himself and not through power as an accident, how did you claim that God is able to create all the motion and rest of His creation to the extent that God enables them to perform them? If God enables them to perform them, His power over such acts becomes evanescent unless God takes power [back] from them. This is a description of power in itself or through accidents. For a being described as such, it is impossible to ascribe power to him when the act from him is not apparent. According to their school, ascribing power to a being whose power can become evanescent is impossible.

My intention in citing the statements of the *Mutazalites*, although I had no need to mention them, is so that a person of contemplation knows that there is no way to prove monotheism and refute the objections of

atheists through their School, and that the true exposition of monotheism belongs to other than them. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Then [Muhammad ibn Shabib] claimed that for any being that possesses power, his power to act precedes the act.[467] This is a description of a being that has power through something else and whose action is through something else, so it changes from state to state, and its essence accepts transformation and evanescence. On the other hand, God is capable of things in Himself and performs them. So [Muhammad Ibn Shabib] statement in this instance is flawed. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

We have demonstrated at more length above. In this is a sign that God made [a person's] essence knowing, and we have explained his delusion. *God is the grantor of success.*[468]

Then [Muhammad ibn Shabib] was asked about the creation of things, since there was no benefit within this for God, but nor was God acting in vain. Ibn Shabib claimed that God created for the accident a reward for eternity, which is [based on] wisdom, so that God's action would have benefit for His creation, and not for a reason that preceded creation and God, such as creating the structure and types of things that come into being from God's people.

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[467] This refers to the theological disagreement regarding *when* a person is given the ability to perform an act. Is the ability to act given to a person before the act, simultaneously with the act or after it? It is impossible for this ability to occur after the act as the person would not have performed the act in the first instance. The *Mutazalites* hold that the ability to perform an act comes before the act, as God gave people autonomy over all acts, whereas Māturīdī claims that the ability to perform an act is given by God simultaneously with the performance of the act.

[468] The supplication was moved to the end of this short paragraph.

[Shaykh] Abū Manṣūr said that we have provided a sufficient answer to the expression. Namely, that asking about the cause is impossible, because it is impossible for anyone to have dominion over God, or for His action to deviate from wisdom such that we can question it.

Furthermore, to ask about identifying the wisdom of the Divine is absurd. The reality of Divinity for us is to know God, know His Truth and Command. To perform in obedience and glorification of Him is our duty, and to prepare the correct response in all that we do and say. This should occupy us from seeking justification for God's actions and advancing a response when the questioner exceeds his limits and turns away from his duty as an excuse for the act that he is responsible for and rewarded for. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

In terms of the position of [Muhammad ibn Shabib] that; 'He created creation for the benefit of creation,' where this benefit is what [Muhammad ibn Shabib] mentioned, this is a digression from the response because the question posed was about the creation of things, and they are a class out of the whole, which is what makes this a digression.

It is the same case for the *Qadariya:* When they are asked about the creation of acts, in their response, they refer to the act of disbelief and sins. This is defective, because this approach is through transmission, while the former that is described is based on reason.

[Shaykh] Abū Manṣūr said that according to our position, the basis of this is that God did not create creation except that the trace of His blessing on it is manifest, the evidence of God's beneficence is clear, the fact of His wisdom, signification of God's Oneness is present, the proof of God's Dominion and efficiency of His will is verified, and the sign of God's power and knowledge of the realities of things is not concealed within it. Therefore asking; 'Why did You bestow blessings?' or 'Why

did You manifest Your generosity?', 'Why was there Wisdom?' and 'Why did you make a demonstration of Your Oneness' and so forth is impossible and defective, such that reason cannot accept it, and it is exceedingly repulsive. Therefore, this type of question is nullified. *God is the grantor of success.*

Then it is possible to say that because God is generous in Himself, capable in Himself, and knowing in Himself, so by His creation, God bestowed generosity on His creation, since God created it and since God is capable of being generous and manifesting His gifts. The basis of this question, in our view, is defective, because we thereby make the action the essence, when God is described by this in pre-eternity. Asking this question is equivalent to asking why He is a knowing God. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Defence of the Necessity of Speculative Thought (*Nažar*) in Theology

One sect said that it is safer to abandon *Nažar* (speculative thought), since the thoughtful speculator is not guaranteed to attain the truth. Then this involves raising the issue of proof, which if the [thoughtful speculator] refrains from, then perdition is ensured, in respect of the fact that if it was not [for speculative thought], he would not pass through the path that he supposes or [overcome] falsehood, to compel him to prove God, since through speculative thought or investigation, there is a certain will that is compelled to know that the truth lies in what was revealed to him, without doubting God on the matter and warning from the suggestions of Satan. In abandoning speculative thought and *Baĥth* (philosophical investigation), there is security from that, since nothing was disclosed to [the person] that compels him to make distinctions, and nothing occurs to [the person's] mind to send him seeking. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Those who argue that speculative thought is necessary, say that in abandoning it there is inevitable perdition, because the necessity of speculative thought does not immediately follow upon the speculative thought that preceded it, but follows upon that by which *Nažar* (speculative thought) and *Baĥth* (philosophical investigation) initially occurred; namely, the reason by which a person knows good and evil deeds, through which he knows his superiority over all other animals and by which the Lord who directs human affairs is known.[469] It also

[469] The *Mutazalites* and *Māturīdīs* hold the position that good and evil are based on reason. Hence, scripture merely confirms certain acts to be good and evil. On the other hand, the *'Ash'arī* School argue that good and evil are thus solely based on Divine

occurs to his mind and intuition that he will be scattered [on the earth upon his death] and annihilated despite his enjoyment of life, that desire of perpetuity was fixed in him and that annihilation is a cause of great pain if he encounters it. Therefore, philosophical investigation is necessary in order to understand what pains him and so that the most delightful and desirable of things are perpetuated for him. His reason does not allow him to risk his soul in putting things to the test without taking up that which informs him of what is harmful among them in order to fear it and the beneficial among them in order to procure it. [He does this] either by seeking to become acquainted with someone whose report is reliable and who can be sure not to betray him in his guidance - so that his orientation in all this may proceed from such person's opinion. Or he strives to examine for himself the little that shows him his outcome, out of that which secures his like from perdition due to its littleness. In both cases philosophical investigation is necessary. His benightedness, due to his innate desires and the refuge that his self sends him, to the hateful things that afflict him and the pain that resides in him, drive him to speculative thought about the state of his soul. [Where he asks], 'How did he become this way?' 'Was he like this in pre-eternity or did he become this way through some manner?' He is not free from certain thoughts that prevent him from abandoning speculative thought into the states of his soul in order to know its principles and to know if it is this way by itself or through a being that designed it. He must know what is sound and what is harmful, and what are its blessings and defences. In all of this, he is driven to speculative thought and the necessity of proof.[470] *God is the grantor of success.*

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command. If God states that something is evil then it is evil, regardless of whether it makes sense or not.

[470] One can see that in this section al-Māturīdī is vehemently advocating the importance of engaging in speculative thought.

Thus, he knows with certainty that the one who entices him to abandon speculative thought is Satan, since Satan's work is to turn him away from the fruits of his reason and frighten him, since he would surely seize the opportunity and attain the object of his desire.[471] The evidence of this is that the use of reason is in considering things so as to understand principles and limits that are concealed, which then indicate that they are originated by a creator, which turns him away from the desires of the self, such that he realises that they are the work of Satan. However, [since] it is not possible for a thing from what is amongst them to neglect the benefits fixed within it, or to cease from its works definitively, but rather it is necessary for them to cease from their harmful aspects and to be used in beneficial ways, then reason and speculative thought through which benefits and harms are known are more deserving of not being neglected.

Thus, for a thoughtful speculator, the possibilities are three-fold. The first is that his speculative thought will lead him to the knowledge of him being created and to see that he has a Creator who will reward him for his good and punish him for his evil, which in consequence will inspire him to avoid that which displeases God and adopt that which pleases God which results in [the person] attaining nobility in this life and the Hereafter. The second is that it will lead him to deny all that has been mentioned and indulge himself in all kinds of pleasure, and therefore punishment awaits [him] in the Hereafter. The third is that it will lead to the realisation of the incomprehensibility of knowledge and its reality, which inspired [the person] to search, but then his heart will rest, and the pain which afflicts [the person] when he attempts to think will disappear. After all, if [a person] is fair-minded in thinking, he will know

[471] Hence according to al-Māturīdī, not using reason is Satanic.

that this speculative thought is a gain for him in all of its aspects. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

If one were to argue that if it is permissible that God can command a person to do that which he does not understand using his reason, then why is it not permissible that God addresses a person in a way the person does not understand?' Then it should be said to him that there is no difference between these two, and therefore it is not right to treat them in the way you have mentioned, because there is nothing that God would command [of a person] without God causing his reason to understand it, and similarly, there is nothing about which God would speak [to a person], unless God caused the way through which [the person] can understand it. Therefore, [if a person] falls short of understanding the foci of the command, he is excused from it. However, the fundamental principle of that [understanding] is different. These ways are known through *Nažar* (speculative thinking) and *Fikr* (intellectual exercise). *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

If one says; in reality, there is no excuse for a person that is more acceptable than him saying to God 'I did not know that my act would displease you, I would have avoided it', and 'If I had known that my action would anger you, I would have refrained from what I did' then why is this not acceptable with respect to the wisdom of God?

That is correct in the relationship among people because of the lack of signs by way of which we may know [each other's] requirements. However, for God, He has given a person signs by way of which [the person] can know [His] command[s], and God has stirred [a person's] mind to thought and reminded him of the various kinds of consequences [of his actions]. Therefore [his disobedience] will only be because of abandoning speculative thought - and this is his own act. As such, on the Day of Judgement, he will be argued against with the very thing he

avoided. This is because through his [own] choice he rejected [speculative thought]. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

[Shaykh] Abū Manŝūr argued that the basis for this is that knowledge of God and His command can only be attained by *'Istadlāl* (inference). God made evident the basis for inference in the form of states of the soul through which [a person] moves. Therefore, we explained that necessity causes [a person] to deploy speculative reasoning and it impels him to reflect on the different states, members, benefits and harms that [the person] sees - in the ignorance of which lies his perdition and in knowledge of which lies his salvation. In addition, a person's salvation lies his knowledge that he [himself] did not arrange the states mentioned, which compels [the person] to know himself, and [to know] God, who made him. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Muhammad ibn Shabib's Argument for the Created Nature of Bodies

Muhammad ibn Shabib argued that bodies are created, since the rest that they cannot avoid subsides in something else, and the motion [that they cannot avoid] is a journey, and both are originated, in that the place differs for one of them from its prior state. This proves that one of the two were created. If this was designated matter [that was] in one of the two bodies, the correct claim is that it was created. Concerning the created nature of the other of the two, it may be known by the termination of the existence of the body in a position other than that in which you first see it. Through this evident necessity of locomotion in the body, we perceive motion that is not sensed, since we observe the difference in the state of the thing that is sensed. Therefore, it is through the dependence of the thing in the first place and its locomotion to the second place that we know that what is designated dependence in the first state becomes motion and transition in the second state, such that motion cannot be described as having either a connection to the body or a difference, since that properly pertains to the body. Then this more properly pertains to Person A[472] than to Person B, because the motion of Person B is imagined to be his absence from Person A, if he is found somewhere other than his first location.

The one who objects to this [or] questions how can this be [by saying that] since [motion] is your act, and a person does not know how this act is performed beforehand, so why do you draw inferences about motion based on analogies?

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[472] I have changed the names which are mentioned in the text as an example from 'Amr' and 'Zayd' to Person A and Person B.

It has been said [in response to the question] that to the contrary; he knows how to move forward and backwards, which is our action; he does not know their otherness from us, and it is from the otherness that we have drawn inferences. Do you not see that a sect denied [motion's] otherness from a body based on the assertion of moving forward and moving backwards? Then, since the created nature of what was mentioned has been proven, and the body does not precede it, then the body's created nature is [also] proven.

[Shaykh] Abū Manṣūr said that this expression is one that the proponents of monotheism endlessly boast about. However, they expanded the question and the answer, so I mentioned this in allusion to what was said without full exposition.

Then the objection was raised that motion [itself] is a [kind of] body. [Muhammad ibn Shabib] said that the one who argues for the pre-eternity of bodies does not ask about it, because [motion] occurs by sense. He claimed it is impossible for a [moving] body to exist in the first place without interpenetration, and interpenetration entails another motion to change location, and so, therefore, motion is not a body. If it makes the second [body to move then] interpenetrating this would require the bodies to interpenetrate without end. Furthermore, [if all of] this were possible then [it would also be possible for] the Universe to be interpenetrate inside an egg. [Muhammad ibn Shabib] made this response whilst in a meeting [with his opponents]. This is entirely drawn out and superfluous, and if Ibn Shabib were just, he would have found [an argument] to preclude his proof, which would have been as follows; 'in its first state, a body is neither moving nor at rest.' So [this point] divested it of what he mentioned, and this entails precedence over what he described. However, if one argues for the pre-eternity of [bodies], this does not prove their initial state, since this result involves arguing for

their created nature, so what was described constrained [God]. *God is the grantor of success.*

[Muhammad ibn Shabib] inferred the fact that the [being at] rest of a body is something other than a body, based on [what is understood when it is] said, 'He is in such and such a house.' If there were nothing other than the body and the house, there would not be a body that is inside something [which is not the house], and [we know] that the house exists, and [the house] is not described as a being in itself.

[Shaykh] Abū Manṣūr said that this is an evident matter that no one questions, since its rest becomes evanescent once it moves without corporeality vanishing from it, so it is proven that it is something other [than this].

Then [Muhammad ibn Shabib] responded to the one said that 'perhaps its rest is with it wherever it is,' [by saying] that since it could be said that the duration of its rest in a place increases or decreases, it is proven that there is something other than the initial rest. Like the former, this is not questioned, and the response to it is as we have explained.[473] *To God, we turn for aid.*

Then he expanded on this type [of argument] and left it where there is no advantage in it. In addition, [Muhammad ibn Shabib] said that a proof of the otherness of 'rest' and 'motion' is that it is possible for each thing to exist in place of the other, and that both are other things. This

[473] Al-Māturīdī is explaining the view of Muhammad Ibn Shabib concerning 'accidents', 'bodies' and 'Prime Matter'. Muhammad Ibn Shabib is attempting to prove that bodies and accidents are not the same and he demonstrates this by providing a number of proofs, such as motion being an accident rather than a body. But al-Māturīdī argues that Muhammad ibn Shabib doesn't believe this to always be the case, because in its 'first state' (when it was Prime Matter) the thing was *neither* an accident nor a body and they were one and the same.

invalidates that argument of many *Mutazilites* when they argue for 'making [something] persist' without 'persistence.'[474] *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Furthermore, [in response] to those who objected that bodies are never devoid of what you mentioned, he responded that it is not possible, since the condition of pre-eternity is only proven for each of them through the existence of the other. This entails the negation of [their] existence. He drew inferences based on what was previously mentioned about entering a house. Furthermore, he also argued that two birds flying in one direction at an equal level a cubit's length apart cannot do so without a limit to their priority, since removing the limit requires that they come together at the same level, when there had been a rivalry for precedence.[475]

[Muhammad ibn Shabib] argued that the opposite of things such as heaviness and lightness, heat and cold etc. is proven, and it is proven that a thing cannot derive from another thing infinitely without beginning. In addition, mutual repulsion is the nature of opposites, which entails their distance from each other. In particular, since the proponents of this argument made two differing things mix together when they were opposites, it is not possible for them to amalgamate as mentioned. Therefore, their difference is by nature, and if it were possible for them to deviate from the nature mentioned, then it would be possible for the thing that was made cool to be hot and the thing that was made hot to be cool. If that were possible, then their annihilation

[474] Here most likely al-Māturīdī refers to the issue of *Baqa* (perpetuity) and the belief of some *Mutazalites* that the end of this Universe will be followed by another Universe that will eternally be made to persist.

[475] Meaning when two equal bodies are travelling in the same direction at the same speed then their distance from one another will remain the same unless something causes the distance to be reduced, such as the second body travelling faster.

would be possible in that they could deviate from perpetuity. If this [argument] is void, then it proves the monotheists' argument for a Knowing Designer who put things in order. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

[Shaykh] Abū Manŝūr said that we say[476] that the claim that there is more than one [god] is not free from the possibility that either each one of them possesses the power to annihilate the other, or that one possesses this power specifically. In either case, the former case or the latter, both are afflicted by incapability, due to the benightedness of planning destruction by overcoming [the other], [even] if it is not by force. If the one was capable, what is other than it would be negated, since it does not allow [anyone] to oppose the one in its power or contest its lordship and it has the power to discharge [anyone from its] kingdom. Furthermore, it is more proper for an incapable and benighted being to be a servant without it being a Sovereign Lord. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

This invalidates the beliefs of the proponents of Light and Darkness, because Light is ignorant of where it falls in the confines of the other, and Darkness of when it is prevented from its work on the other, [a work that] is evil, such that their parts spread and their states scatter until each one is unable to manifest its dominion and take control of what belongs to it. God's Divinity does allow for such ascription.

Then there is the teaching of the Dualists that each of the [gods is responsible] for one aspect [meaning the Light and Darkness] and [these gods] are [physically] above all aspects. If elevation is proof of pre-eternity, there must have been origination with respect to extent, even if

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[476] Once again, I have removed the supplication that is found mid-paragraph and left the supplication at the end of the paragraph. The removed supplication is the same that is found throughout the book *'God is the grantor of success'*.

there was not origination in everything. Moreover, if Light is not able to liberate its bounded part from its enemy in that unbounded part, and those parts are not able to preserve that part from them before they fall into their confines, how can [Light] escape, if it wishes, from the confines of Darkness after it falls into them? In regard to those who make all senses and knowledge Light and not Darkness, as well as [that the Light is] everything that befits God, He is thereby a God who is blind and cannot see, incapable and cannot act, weak and cannot exert strength, and evil by nature and not by force. So we ask God to protect us from turning away from His path and being affected by the propagation of Dualism since there is no strength to find the truth except by God.

Furthermore, either of two things must be alone in a location if it is a body or an accident. If it is an accident, then its contradiction requires its destruction, and if it is a body, then the place of either of them with regards to its essence does not subsist in the opposite of its state, such as the liquescent on dry land [or when] the nocturnal is removed from sight during the day. In addition, if it is not of its essence, then Good could associate with Evil and Evil with Good, which violates the position they have adopted with respect to number. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Refutation of the Teachings of the *Dahrīya* (Materialists)

[Shaykh] Abū Manŝūr said that we have mentioned the teachings of the *Dahrīya* according to Ibn Shabib and others so that the teachings of their school are clear.[477] Clarifying the dogmas of their school is part of proving their defectiveness, once it is known that they agree on the pre-eternity of the Universe's Prime Matter, but then they disagree on the pre-eternity or origination of [the Universe's] making.

The naturalists claim that there are four [natures, namely,] Hot, Cold, Wet and Dry, and the Universe differed through the differing mixture of each and was balanced by their equal mixture.[478] In this manner, the rotation of the Sun, Moon and stars continues as is seen, and there is no beginning for things. They called their movements accidents, and gave, as an example for their falsehood, dyes such as white, red, black and green; that their colours differ when mixed in large amounts or little amounts, or thin consistencies or thick consistencies, not that [according to them] there is an accident of colour, even if [the colour] perhaps turns out in [such] a way that [even] an expert of these colours may not be [aware of] its results; and according to their position it is the same case for natures.[479]

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[477] What makes this chapter different from the previous chapter is that al-Māturīdī is relaying the position of Naturalists according to Muhammad ibn Shabib.

[478] Al-Māturīdī is referring to the concept of the four temperaments that were used in Greek and Chinese medicine and later by Avicenna, namely; hot, cold, wet and dry and that all things in the Universe consist of the balance of these basic elements. They then apply these to other aspects such as the Seasons of the year and the makeup of one's characteristics.

[479] He is explaining that the Naturalists believe that all things in the Universe come about as a result of the mixture of the Four Natures. They don't believe in the concept of 'accidents', even though they then try to explain motion is an accident. Avicenna

[Shaykh] Abū Manṣūr said that whoever considers this argument with the example they cited, finds that it supports the claims of monotheists, because dyes do not mix by themselves. If they [do] mix by themselves, they turn out a repugnant colour, such as is considered corruption of the dyes according to reason. But if a wise, knowing being that knows the outcome of that mixture mixes them, they turn out dexterous and beautiful. Whereas the Universe turned out dexterous, it is proven that through which the Universe exists is a knowing, wise being that knows the outcomes of things and brought them forth in this way. This results in the defectiveness of the argument that those natures or Prime Matter or whatever names they called it became in such a way that the Universe is [spontaneously], and therefore signifies that the one who originated them is a wise designer and that it must have been *Creatio ex Nihilo*. Whereas for colours each one is not described as a thing [which comes] out of what they mentioned in terms of Hot and Cold, and since among things there may be one in which one colour predominates when it is hot, and another predominates when it is cold, then it proves that colours are nothing like what they have mentioned, which requires other than what they have argued. *God is the grantor of success.*

Furthermore, in the same vein, we find the flavours in them are different, so that it is of one colour and one nature and turns out as one type of flavour, such as saltiness, sourness, bitterness or a material that does not tend to any of that. It is proven that this was by the design of the One who is capable of making everything as He wills without [any] reasons. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

However, it is necessary that these natures are either corporeal substances or accidents. If they are corporeal substances, they attain the

later developed the concept of the Four Humours/temperaments to include motion, and therefore it wasn't an 'accident' in that scheme.

differences mentioned through the accidents that arise in them, namely, amalgamation and separation, and if it were not for these two, every corporeal substance would be scattered. The differences of corporeal substances with the amalgamation of [properties] within them indicates that accidents prevail in them and cause them to transform from state to state. [Since] the accidents on their own do not subsist in or breach things, it is proven that this operation was worked in them through one who knows that they operate in such a way. In addition, no one could know this except for the one who is able to make those substances suitable to bear such accidents, and it is impossible to have such knowledge except for the one who makes them such. This results in the claim that there is a capable, knowing One for whom nothing is hidden and for whom it is not difficult to create what He wants. On the other hand, if they are accidents, it is impossible for them to exist and subside in themselves, so it is necessary to claim that there is a pre-eternal Creator who creates what is in it and through whom it enters into the bounds of existence. However, the created nature of accidents contains no mutual contradiction. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Furthermore, it is known that such natures are opposite, and the reality of being opposites is mutual repulsion, which results in separation, and separation leads to scattering and mutual annihilation. It is not possible for the foundations of things to exist for themselves and subside in themselves with the contradiction that I have mentioned. It is proven that if it were possible, it would be through some check on this mutual repulsion that leads to scattering, which is something amalgamating them after separation, something subjugating them, and since [it is] through amalgamation [that] the Universe exists, this proves that [the Universe] is originated. This means that the argument for 'natures' is defective, because the emergence of one thing from another thing is not so improbable based on reason as is the subsisting of a thing with its

opposite, which negates it. Due to the improbability of this for their [application of] reason, they reached the position that they stated. And if in their position they were bound by [the result], they saw the defectiveness of their claim and had no excuse. *God is the protector.*

Another sect argues a similar case, but they claimed that categories [natures] do not have a known number, and all of them argued for the pre-eternity of things in their entirety, from the North and the South, and the West and the South, and from above and below.

A sect of Astrologers claimed that the stars infinitely direct the state of the world, that they are connected to it and its fortunes derive from them, and [fortune] differs with the different stars it is connected to, like the tool of a brocade maker through threads joined to the silk with the top of the tool, so that [the threads] appear and disappear by raising and lowering the wood. In the same manner, the form of the stars' relationship to the world changes with the changing motion of the stars, and in their variation and conjunction lies fortune and misfortune.[480] They are always moving, and from each motion something occurs that is different from what occurs and is produced due to another motion. In the same way that they talk about the chicken and the egg, they say that the motions of the stars are like the brocade that I mentioned.

They claimed that bodies are pre-eternal and are not accidents, and motions are accidents that come into existence without limit. They made the condition of the whole Universe dependent on the amalgamation and divergence of the stars and orbits, so just as with [bodies], they say that the stars are pre-eternal. *God is the grantor of success.*

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[480] Astrologers hold the opinion that stars and planets affect people, so that each person has heavenly bodies that affect them. For example, a person born in July is affected by the Sun, meaning it affects their personality and character. It was an idea that was later held by Avicenna.

[Shaykh] Abū Manṣūr said that in terms of the argument for motions without end, we have explained above that this is defective. There is no doubt that a motion that ended is an end to the preceding motions, so that nothing of what preceded it continues afterwards. If it is proven that there is an end to the motion through annihilation and termination, it is not possible for the termination to come to an end because the beginning does not come to an end. Therefore, this proves that there is a beginning.

Furthermore, we see based on observation that all corporeal substances are of differing dimensions. It is not possible for them to be in this way as opposed to another way, except that they are so, because of the least difference [between them] which appears to be most. It is established from this that [these substances] started from the smallest and then gained magnitude and density after not having them. The fineness of their magnitude and density at the time of their coming into existence after non-existence was not because of anything that preceded them. This is because it is necessary that all of them in the preceding state would be equal, but in fact, the actual difference has been established. Therefore, this proves that which precedes them is their coming into existence after non-existence, and this is exactly what is meant [by the Universe being originated].[481]

Furthermore, if [the] circular motion [of bodies] were to be made straight from one direction, [then] some of them would succeed others, and the existence of some [would] entail the annihilation of others. As such, if motions were necessarily pre-eternal, them ceasing to exist

[481] Here, he is once again arguing against the doctrine of those who believe that the Universe came from Prime Matter: if everything proceeded from Prime Matter, then all those things would be the same. The fact that we observe that there are differences, large or small, means that they must have been originated in this way.

would also be [pre-eternal]. This is a contradiction, because existence and annihilation cannot be together in the same state - which means that they cannot be together in any state. This proves that it is necessary that they have a beginning.[482]

Furthermore, based on observation, if one comes to rest or slows down, the other would take the lead. Also, since they are moving in a straight line, it is impossible that the starting point of one of them is not the starting point of the other, or that one of them is faster than the other. This means that the elimination of the distance between them results in the limits [of distance] being nullified. This nullification results in the rejection of [what is] perceived [in terms of the pre-eternity of the Universe]. This is because the beginning [of things in motion] has been established. This is also applied to [things that are in] circular motion. *God is the grantor of success.*

This negates [the belief of] all those who argue for the pre-eternity of substances [and] that [they] did not emerge from accidents.[483] The same argument addresses the teachings of Naturalists. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*[484]

Then it is said to both these sects: 'How did you know that it is this way?' They claimed an authoritative transmission that was contested by the

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[482] As Al-Māturīdī has explained previously, the fact that a body contains accidents such as motion and rest that exist in it only when the one of these ceases to exist (i.e. it doesn't possess the accidents of 'motion' and 'rest' simultaneously) means that its existence is not pre-eternal, as this would be a contradiction.

[483] Al-Māturīdī claims that those who believe that the Universe emerged from Prime Matter argue that this Prime Matter is not a substance and nor is it an accident. Māturīdī argues that the process of something emerging involves some form of motion and an increase in the quantity of the Universe after it emerges from the Prime Matter (i.e. an accident), but then they also argue that the Universe did not emerge as a result of accidents, which is a clear contradiction.

[484] The supplication was moved to the end of the paragraph.

transmission that has been received from those who have proofs of truthfulness, who are more deserving of being believed and are Prophets. If they claim that observations and the senses gave [credence] to the lie that they know through themselves, they [still] do not mention their [own] pre-eternity nor did they witness the direction of the stars and natures. If they go back to inferring what they inspected, there is nothing in what they inspected that indicates that the stars provide direction or that natures are pre-eternal and generate the Universe through their mixing, but rather if the argument of the two sects were reversed, it would be closer to [the position of] existence [after non-existence] and it is more correct in inference. In terms of 'Nature', it is the case that much disturbance and motion generate heat in the disturbed, moving body, and much rest and stability generates moisture, such that 'natures' are [merely] accidents [from] among the states of the Universe, rather than the Universe being generated from them, and this is closer to the truth of the senses. Then it is said to them that the disturbance of the Celestial Sphere and the motion and fluctuation of the stars in states of amalgamation and separation occurs through the fluctuating states of the substances of the Planets, and the trees, seas and waters they contain, and the essence of separation, whose vapours rise or which is by its essence like fire, and the real substance, through which the states of the stars fluctuate and so on. This is more correct, since it is closer to the observation of the eye and more likely to be proof of the unseen.[485] *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Then they argued with respect to what the Naturalists posited; that the Creator's act proceeded dexterously and proficiently due to the wisdom

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[485] Even though al-Māturīdī is relaying the position of Muhammad ibn Shabib in relation to the viewpoint of the Naturalists, a significant number of the arguments presented in this chapter have been relayed previously.

and power He possesses, and if it were not for that, what I mentioned would not be possible. Due to the foregoing design, God acted perfectly in this, and the situation of the stars is similar. If it were as the [Astrologers] claim, there would be the same design of a knowing, wise being who created them on this basis. If they had this capacity for design, it would not be possible for them to tire themselves and be pained through their course and constant motions, since such is the state of living beings in the present Universe. Such states tire them and pain them.

On the other hand, if [the direction of the Universe] was through inanimate bodies, it would be through directing other things in the manner of the brocade, as was mentioned. However, if it is known that God was able to do this without tiring Himself through His free will, it would be known that all of this is through the design of a wise, self-sufficient being who uses all that which was mentioned. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Furthermore, if it was possible to say about our Universe that it was due to the design of the one that has been mentioned - a being such as Him - then it is possible that it can be said that [a person] was designed by a being that is higher than him, and so on *ad infinitum*.[486] This results in the nullification of their argument that the stars direct the Universe. Or the Universe does eventually reach an end, which invalidates their claim that things are without end. It requires arguing for the One to whom the design of all things reverts, and God is the one who knows the outcome of affairs, and who pre-ordains every end that is attained. However, in their argument, they acknowledged that they do not [in fact] have an

[486] Here al-Māturīdī is attempting to argue that if you posit that something was designed by something created and that in turn was designed by something else that is created, then you can continue this argument *Ad infinitum.*

argument, because they claimed that they do not have a choice but rather they are compelled, as they say, as their opponents are likewise in their denials. Such mutual denial and contradiction derive from the designer, and the one whose design is such is a corrupter, and thus it may be said that he did not speak about himself. There are two aspects to this. One aspect is that their argument fails and only the argument of the monotheists remains. The other aspect is to deny the testimony of the eyes and the free will that every rational being knows. And [it is a flaw to] deny the testimony of the eyes that his senses are surrounded by and [instead] claim [the truth of the] unseen thing that his senses do not apprehend in order to deny that which his senses grasp. All praise is to God who provides sufficient help and true separation from evil. *And Assistance is through God.*

If the states were compelled, then no one would give up food and drink out of fear, and they would not go towards them out of appetite and the delights that are found within them. But all this is found in things that are subject to natures, to the extent that in large beings there is something less of this than in small beings. If this were by nature or the conjunction of the stars, then this would consistently apply to all.[487]

Furthermore, the emergence of acts of divergent states is impossible from something with a nature, such as cooling and heating, or good and evil, since it is proven that the foundation of a thing is not from a thing with a [blind] nature, but through a wise, knowing being who made everything this way through creation and existence. If acts were by

[487] This is the same point that al-Māturīdī argued earlier in the book; that if nature compels one to act then everyone would eat the same quantity of food, desire the same quantity and need the same quantity. The fact that this is not the case means that there must be a being that is the real cause for everything that causes variances in all aspects of life. This argument requires developing further because in its original form it lacks strength.

compulsion, the doer could not refrain from them - like someone pushed by the nape of his neck, or pushed off the roof of a house, or tied by a rope. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

It is the case that in existence that a paralysed [person] knows that he cannot refrain from what he does, and likewise for the blind man and all those with an afflicted organ. [The person] also knows that the removal of such afflictions enables the opposite of such states. This proves that the claim of [nature] necessitating on the whole is false.[488]

Once sect said that the Prime Matter of the Universe was pre-eternal and called it *Hayūla*[489], and [said] that it had force and perpetually had the following attributes; that it has no length, no breadth, no depth, no weight, no extension, no colour, no taste, no smell, no smoothness, no roughness, no heat, no cold, no moisture, no motion, no rest and no accidents in its original state. It was for this reason that it was called '*Hayūla*'. *Hayūla* was transformed into force by nature and not by choice, and so these accidents came into being, and they called it 'substance', meaning that it is one substance, which is called the substance of the Universe. Meanwhile, separation and amalgamation came about through accidents, and accidents are not described by difference and amalgamation, because they only exist through something other than themselves. An accident does not subsist in an accident, but [instead] in a substance, and it is through [the accident] that the substance differs and amalgamates.

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[488] Al-Māturīdī is attempting to argue that if nature compels everything, then nature would ensure that there are no afflictions in what it creates, because nature would not create something for a purpose such as being tested by God, but instead nature would create all things naturally, which would mean creating something without deficiencies.

[489] As explained in a previous footnote Al-Māturīdī categorises Aristotle as *As-hāb al-Hayūla* - people who hold the position that the entire Universe came from Prime Matter (*Hayūla*).

The Categories of Aristotle

Aristotle, who is the author of this statement in his book called '*Mantiq*' (Logic)[490], mentions ten categories. (1) The category of Substance; like 'man' i.e. what is called substance [essence]; (2) The category of Place; like saying 'where'; (3) [the category] of Quality; like you saying 'how'; (4) [the category of] Time; 'when'; (5) Quantity; [meaning] 'how much'; (6) [the category of] Relation, in which mentioning one thing involves another as well, like father/son, slave/master, companion, and the like; (7) [the category of] Possession; like you saying 'nobility' and 'one who has family' and the like - they call it the category of 'Possession'; (8) [the category of] State or Position; such as standing and sitting; (9) [the category of] Action; like you saying 'he ate' and the like; (10) Being 'Acted upon'; like you saying 'eaten'. No one is able to mention anything that goes beyond this totality. They claimed that force is ignorant and acts by [its innate] nature and that the *Hayūla* does not need accidents.

[Shaykh] Abū Manŝūr said that whoever contemplates their conclusions knows that they proposed them because they were ignorant of the blessings of God and were blind to the path of guidance and went astray. Then the confusion of error impelled them to heed a conception that reason does not accept, and imagination does not summon. *God is the one who supports.*

If this was not the case, then what is it that they were presenting [in terms of] the beginning of the Universe being what was said? Then the Prime [Matter] that was described contains [the Universe] as [they have] mentioned, and its operation that was characterised is that the substance

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[490] The Categories are mentioned in Aristotle's '*Organon*', which is a collection of Aristotle's six works on logic.

of the Universe does not contain evidence [of this], and transmission [from people] does not contain the possibility [of this]. However, they accepted the argument of the monotheists in [their] description of God in that they described *Hayūla* [in the same manner]. However, they did not consider what that argument binds them to, since they went back and negated what they had affirmed, because they made it [so] that [Prime Matter], for which [according to them] it is not possible to undergo accidents, is removed from the meaning of 'substance', [which then means that we have] substance by substance by substance *Ad Infinitum*. Then it became a sign with respect to that which did not remain of its initial state. What remained of the [Prime Matter] is that the Universe [emerged from it], so that it was [initially] pre-eternal and [then] created [when it became the Universe], and this Universe was only [composed of] substances and accidents, and anything [from the Prime Matter] that did not have the description of [substance and accident] became evanescent. This entails the annihilation of the Universe in itself, and the impossibility of the pre-eternal in itself bearing accidents that subjugated it and caused its annihilation, which [anyway] means that it does not subside in itself [in the first place]. This results in the claim that the whole Universe is originated, and the magnitude of this claim drove them to that conception, since everything that is received [by the senses] is either accident or substance, and was not the foundation [of the Universe].

Then [Aristotle's own] saying is void if [Aristotle] called himself wise, since he forces others to deviate from his opinion and follow his whim, after he says that the Prime [Matter] that [the Universe] is from was ignorant and foolish, and that accidents are other things generated by a weak force that has no wisdom or knowledge in it, which is one of its

members without which nothing is attained.[491] So from where did it attain priority over it? If this were possible, without a Prime [Matter] through which it becomes this way, then let him say that the whole Universe is like what he says of himself. Then the force that transformed the *Hayūla* necessarily has dominion over that through which it transformed it. So let him say of God that He created *Hayūla* or what God wished in a way that accepts transformation and through which God engages in composition. Then let [Aristotle] call what he wishes the annihilation of what God transformed. Therefore, the foundation through which the Universe exists and is destroyed is nullified, since it is impossible for a being subsiding in itself to be destroyed so that through his destruction is the transformation and subsiding of something else.

Moreover, *Hayūla* involves the destruction of [Prime Matter], so that it becomes without the force of transformation, which invalidates the Universe and its transformation from state to state constantly. Its existence indicates the defectiveness of this Prime [Matter]. Furthermore, in the present Universe, there is nothing that becomes suitable for a thing that was not suitable for it before except that a wise being makes it that way. So it is proven that if the beginning of the Universe was suitable, that it is possible that the existence of these substances and accidents likewise derives from it, and each of them was made in this way.

Further, since this force transformed it by nature, it does not depart from it, so why is it that it was devoid of its operation in pre-eternity, when something with a nature does not cease its operation in the present Universe? The accidents that were originated must have either been in

[491] Here al-Māturīdī is arguing that Aristotle holds the opinion that the Universe was generated from Prime Matter naturally, without any choice from this Prime Matter.

the *Hayūla*, which would invalidate his statement that *Hayūla* was devoid of [accidents] until they came into existence, or they did not exist and then came into existence from nothing, since he described the force in the same way that he described the *Hayūla*, and it did not have accidents, so it is proven that they also are from nothing. This point compelled them to make the claim that they did, which is invalid, thanks be to God.

However, he made it possible to contradict them in everything they said about force [and] that this [Universe] is made from *Hayūla* by force. It is not free [from being affected by] something other than *Hayūla* such that there would be two [of them co-existing]. [Aristotle] claimed that 'how much' falls within the category of number, so there was no origination, and it was required to be here, or it is *Hayūla*, and this invalidates [Aristotle's] claim that it is with *Hayūla*, or it is what *Hayūla* transformed [into], as if it transformed itself and not *Hayūla*. Furthermore, [Aristotle] claimed that such accidents emerged in *Hayūla* and set it into motion and rest, raised it and lowered it, without there being another thing by which it was moving, resting, rising or lowering. And there are defective examples of what it originated from, and it is in its fundamental essence the most defective.

Muhammad ibn Shabib claimed that [Aristotle] called force 'motion'. In his narration, it cannot be described by that with which it is impermissible to describe *Hayūla,* and he mentioned that [Aristotle] retracted something concerning *Hayūla*. So I do not know whether one or the other is correct. However, he called force 'motion' and force is in *Hayūla*. Thus his claim that *Hayūla* is not described using 'motion' is invalid, since he [did indeed] describe it that way. Then [force] must necessarily be connected with or separate from [*Hayūla*], and whichever of the two he says, involves an assertion of being corporeal and

contingent, since being between and contiguity are different to that which is [completely] connected or separate.

Then they say, as do the Astrologers, that corporeal substances came into being from motions of the Prime Matter. It is known that corporeal substances exist from above, below and every side, despite the impossibility of such movements, so it is proven that this is void. In this issue, al-Nazzam contradicted them, [saying] that if force's transformation of *Hayūla* was what caused accidents to come into being, whereupon they differed, such as colour, taste, heat, texture, and so on, then does all this come into existence at the same time and by a motion, or is it from one side? It is [then said by them that] it is from multiple sides. [Such as in the of case Aristotle who] claimed that the maximum number of such sides is six and more than twelve such accidents may come into being, which proves that this is not in order for the transformation [because of the] force. However, the fact that the transformation is [only] from one side whilst the accidents are [still] multiple [which is contrary to their claim], proves that this is not as he has mentioned.

Muhammad ibn Shabib objected to them that before the accidents come into being, *Hayūla* does not have length, and the accidents do not have length, so how do they acquire length once they exist? The same goes for breadth. If this were possible, then it would be possible to join that which is devoid of something with that which possesses it, so that a lack of it would become like non-blackness and blackness, and likewise for all attributes.

He adduced lime and arsenic in response, of which each separately does not burn, but which burn when they are combined. Each of them separately could not be further from causing burns, but one of them contains that which prevents burning, while the other contains that

which prevents the prevention from preventing, and so it burns. It is not the case that it does not contain [something that] burns or that both were this way. In your view, the situation of accidents is as we have mentioned, and it is impossible for the preventive factor to exist within, if it was long or black, and it is the same case with *Hayūla*, so therefore they differed.

[Shaykh] Abū Manŝūr said that according to our position, the basis of this and in what was said concerning the stars and natures, is that authoritative transmission must inevitably be referred to on this - and concerning these things the transmission of the monotheists is more reliable, because it is accompanied by proofs of truthfulness. Or inferences must be drawn from the seen reality concerning the unseen reality.[492] If that is his approach, that which exists through it must have this description, since the existent being is in a certain state and through its being it is considered, so this invalidates their claim that the Universe comes into existence and is moved by the stars and the transformation of *Hayūla* by force, and *Hayūla* and force are all [there is]. And if this is the case, it is by considering that qualities in existence indicate it and that the Prime [Matter] and anything with a nature does not change from its condition to the opposite without another being, either wise or foolish, working the change, although it is clear both situations have consequences. It is the same way with the Prime [Matter] to which they attributed this situation, [namely] that it does not change to other than the state whose consequences are suitable except by a wise being, since it is in this manner. This invalidates their Prime Matter and proves that the Prime Matter bears the accidents it bears by something else making

[492] Once again, he is referring to message from the Prophets being a reliable transmission.

it this way, which means that it is originated by a wise Creator.[493] *God is the grantor of success.*

Furthermore, it is known concerning [a thing] whose nature is to burn that it only burns that which is able to receive burns by nature, and likewise in the case of [something] turning black [due to this burning], and likewise for all states and substances. Then it is not in the nature of something that lifts to transform into the thing that is lifted by nature, and it is not in the nature of a thing which burns to [itself] turn into something that burns. For whoever seeks that in the present Universe, nothing less is prepared for [the person] other than knowledge of existence and combination between the two. Thus, on this basis is the situation of the unseen reality. Therefore, that which they strove to prove is void, which is the meaning of their stance. *God is the grantor of success.*

If all the foundations [of the Universe] that they mentioned are inanimate objects that have no direction and operate by [innate or blind] nature and not free will, it would not be possible for the things whose existence derives from them to [then] be knowing, hearing, seeing, capable, living and mortal, and [it would not be possible] for [the Universe] to have limits [or for it to be] outside of [being affected by] limits. This proves that all of it is through a knowing Creator. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

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[493] Al-Māturīdī argues that even if one believes that the origination of the Universe is from Prime Matter, because it is affected by accidents, then this Prime Matter itself must have been originated by a Creator.

Refutation of the *Sumaniya's* Thesis that the World is Without Beginning and Incessantly Sinks Downward: Al-Nazzam's Arguments with a Commentary by Al-Māturīdī

The *Sumaniya,*[494] a sect of the *Dahrīya,* who agree with them that things were originated in pre-eternity, said that the Earth incessantly sinks downward because of what is above it [that causes it to sink]. Al-Nazzam asked them about this, and they adduced it [is due to its] weight, since a heavy thing cannot resist falling and does not rise in the air. [Al-Nazzam] objected by pointing to the speed at which a stone falls by its weight if it is dropped with a feather, [which would] mean that the Earth was heavier than both of them and [yet] they caught up to it. Then he objected to them by pointing to the fact that they have seen the wind carry something and lift it high without [any specific] directions. 'So what would you say if [the wind] was beneath the Earth and [the Earth] was carried by its force? How do you ascertain that things fall without rising or moving up, when you have observed something like the above happen?' At this point, the argument relayed was cut off.

If this is the result of the debate, then it is a mockery. Instead, since the sky has been in one state since we have been observing it and we have observed the Earth to have weight, and that each of its parts, if they were dropped from the highest conceivable point, would catch up with the Earth. This indicates that the Earth settles in one state, as does the sky, and they are both heavy by nature and have no tendency to float, proving that their stability is through a powerful, wise being, and that He created them in such a way that the [the mind] cannot grasp, and reason cannot

[494] *Sumaniya* were a sect of materialists who held the view that the Universe is pre-eternal.

attain. This results in the invalidation of the pre-eternity [of the Universe] and its derivations. Their debate was absurd, since their method was to seek to illuminate hidden matters and to dwell on the limits of wisdom.[495] They claimed that the Universe was in its state of difference and conjunction and that the difference of substances and accidents subsists by nature and is generated by the motions of things or admixed with that which has no direction or knowledge and is not capable of wisdom. Human beings are among these, so in their view, it is impossible for there to be knowledge or wisdom, except if it is proven that something other than that from which the Universe derives has [these qualities]. The deviation of the highest substance of the Universe [i.e. humans] from the nature of the Universe is evidence that [a person] is as God wished to create him. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

[495] Al-Māturīdī is refuting the point of the *Sumaniya* that the Universe is incessantly sinking downwards. He didn't know about the laws of gravity, but it was known that if you drop an object it will travel downwards until it hits the surface. He is saying that this always happens, and there is no instance of an object being dropped and due to the Earth sinking downwards it does not reach the surface - although what was overlooked by al-Māturīdī was that the object would also hit the surface if the object was travelling faster than the speed at which the Earth was sinking.

Against the Sophists: Ibn Shabib's Argument with a Commentary by Al-Māturīdī

[Shaykh] Abū Manṣūr explained that the Sophists argued that when we find that a person knows something which then turns out to be false, and he finds pleasures that later pass away, and the vermin of land die at sea and vermin of sea die on the land, and that bats see at night and are blind during the day – [all] this proves that there is no use in knowledge, and rather there is only belief and nothing else, and that anything else [other than this] differs [in terms of it being real knowledge].

[Muhammad] Ibn Shabib raised the question that you say that 'there is no knowledge' through a knowledge that you have presumed to have proven, or if it is not through knowledge, [then] you cannot advocate it with what you know is your presupposition that there is no knowledge. If they argue that [this information is attained] 'through knowledge' they have in fact proven that knowledge exists; and if they say [something] other [than this] they are forced to keep silent. That is the teaching related to this chapter. [496]

[Shaykh] Abū Manṣūr said that in reference to the debate, what [the Sophist] said is meaningless argumentation - because [the Sophist] said that he has concluded that there is [only] belief and not [sensory] knowledge, but then everything he relays in the debate [is in fact information gained through sensory knowledge]. Instead, [Muhammad Ibn Shabib] debated this with those who deny the reality [of things], and therefore his argument is contested by verification, and it is a similar case

[496] Once again, despite the fact that al-Māturīdī has treated this subject extensively earlier in the book, this time he is relaying the points of contention of Muhammad ibn Shabib against the Sophists.

with his claim. Meanwhile, whoever claims that there is nothing other than belief, since anything that is said is [a kind of belief], then you [should] scare him by beating him or giving him pain [as he denies sensory knowledge],[497] [it will demonstrate that] he believes what others actually believe [in terms of knowledge], and [you can] deny this by [stating] the opposite or by saying that you believe that his denial is an affirmation, until he is compelled of necessity to affirm what he denies. The fact [is] that it [too] is [a] belief, and nothing else contains proof of the belief, since his argument denying knowledge is rendered invalid by proving that it is belief. *God is the grantor of success.*

The Sophists cite by objection that there are things that turn out to be their opposite, [but] even if knowledge is not definite, the defence that the opposite emerges is invalid. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Muhammad ibn Shabib asked himself how does one man see one thing to be two, and another sees only one thing, which of them is right? He claimed that the first man considers it this way because his sight sees it from its perspective - meaning that he sees with one eye something other than that which he sees with the other. The proof of this is that he does not see it [in] this way if he becomes one-eyed.

[Shaykh] Abū Manŝūr said that the position in terms of this and related [issues], is that sensory knowledge differs through the different states of sensation. The person sending [and receiving information from the senses] knows what affliction [the senses] have, so he knows that the affliction is a veil. Hence, through sensation, he knows the opposite of reality when there is an affliction [of his senses], and he knows [true]

[497] Please see footnote 19 for the explanation of the point relayed by al-Māturīdī in terms of al-Māturīdī speaking in jest due to the fallacy of the position.

reality when the affliction is removed. This is that [at the specific] time that the sensation occurs [a person may be blocked from seeing] based on the specification, distance and obstacles in the air between [the object and the person], whilst at another time it falls within the sight. It is the same way with every sensation. This is all known through the senses, and there is a negation of that. Since this argument is invalidated by the opposite claim, they protest it or affirm it, so their claim to deny [sensory] reality is invalidated, since the difference is proven. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

He knows that which is mentioned by drawing close to it or increasing the light on it in order to know its reality if his sight is too weak to perceive it due to affliction. In such conditions it becomes clear [when removing the obstacle]. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Our response is to cite the [example of] a person with a bilious humour[498] who finds honey to be bitter due to the affliction he knows himself to have in the organ through which he tastes. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Ibn Shabib said that then there was a disagreement. One sect said that honey [in fact] contains bitterness, so if it connects with that which is in his taste, its bitterness becomes stronger and he finds it bitter. Another sect said that the bitterness of bitter things lies in the taste of a person with a bilious humour, and so it is since the sweetness of the honey connects with the 'bitter' that is in his sense of taste, and moves in his taste, that his sense of it is as such.

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[498] 'Bilious humour' is once again referring to the Four Humours of the Greeks. Like many of his purported enemies' ideas that Māturīdī insists on chastising, it seems he himself has learnt from the same sources and often actually subscribes to them – such as his apparent belief here in the 'Four Humours' or his repeated use of categories such as 'substances' and 'accidents' etc. etc.

[Shaykh] Abū Manŝūr said that the [correct] position on this is that [a person] contains limits and sides, and each side faces the side of the thing that is perceived, and [the person] only perceives from the side that actually faces him. So if an affliction besets the side through which he perceives what is facing it, or what is facing him is covered by a thing that conceals it, a portion thereof disappears from the side and what is facing it, so that it is like perceiving without the side that is for that type of perception. The conditions of this are threefold; transforming the side through which he does not perceive anything at all; stabilizing by removing all obstacles so that he perceives the reality of the thing perceived; or a mixture of the two - so [that] through their variation the perception varies. All of this is a truth of the senses which is known by the senses, so in the knowledge of the senses it is not possible for there to be disagreement as to the reality [of things]. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Then according to al-Nazzam, the *Sumaniya* held certain positions that there is no use in, such as [that] they claimed that cold and moisture are the prevailing natures in fish, so if they come to the shore, where heat and dryness prevail, it overcomes the moisture and dampness and the fish die. It is a similar case for all opposite natures; if an opposing nature prevails, it is destroyed. Therefore, it is a similar case with birds in the air and dogs in water, since they are more balanced than fish - living in both water and the land. The bat's sight is weak and not strong [and] it is dissipated by the light of the sun, just like it blinds a man if he looks directly at the sun. If the sun disappears, then what weakened the bat's sight is removed, and it can see. Thus, if the darkness is intense, it does not see. The lion, on the other hand, has strong sight - it sees in the day more than what others see, and so likewise the hindrance for it at night is less than what hinders other creatures.

[Shaykh] Abū Manṣūr said that all of this is absurd. The argument should rather be that it was created this way, with this nature, in that some substances fly in the air, whilst others swim in the water, and yet others walk on the face of the Earth. So to undertake justifications like this presumes more wisdom than the Lord of the Worlds, and seeking reasons for that which is not permitted does not attain understanding. This is not of the type of investigation of corporeal substances that is within the bounds of the law.[499] *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Then he raised the objection to himself that the one that dreams sees something and [yet] it turns out to be the opposite of what he saw, so maybe wakefulness is similar, or that one cannot be distinguished from the other. He claimed that what distinguishes between the two states is that he sees what is not rational in a state of sleep - he can see himself dead for example, and the dead do not know, or he can see his head tossed onto his [own] lap, and such a thing cannot be seen by waking sight. Therefore, it is said to them: then how does one who sleeps imagine the impossible [in his dreams,] but it does not come to pass [in reality]?

It was said that when he sees himself in a dream, he does not think he is alive or dead, which is not possible [when in a wakeful state]. Likewise,

[499] Al-Māturīdī is quite flippant in this paragraph and seems to yet again display an unfortunate tendency to attack his perceived enemies in the harshest terms - even when they are in the right or seem to be sincere. This was a common occurrence amongst theologians at that time, as all of them wanted to aggressively present their own doctrine. He also makes the bizarre assertion that such researches are prohibited in Islam - whilst failing to offer the slightest textual or other justification. This demonstrates how Māturīdī fluctuates between demanding the use of reason in certain chapters in the book and completely abandoning it, such as in this paragraph. On the other hand, al-Nazzam's treatment of the point is effective, explaining how different types of creations have various natures and how these natures relate to the Universe.

if he sees his head tossed onto his [own] lap, he does not imagine that [he] is in two places.

He claimed that knowledge of the truth of what is seen in wakefulness and the falsehood of what is seen in sleep is by acquisition, the evidence of which is what was stated. He said that a person might see in his sleep [something] that is true, but rather this [true information] is through an angel that shows him [true information] or by way of warning [from God], or something in that regard.

[Shaykh] Abū Manṣūr said that [our teaching pertaining to this issue] is what we initially stated, [meaning] that the sleeper has an affliction due to what he knows during wakefulness, and this is the reality of his senses. In sleep, he sees something that is forced and in wakefulness he does not. In this way, the pain of being struck remains in a state of wakefulness, and he knows the pleasure of what he eats. There is no issue between them and us concerning these circumstances, but rather the reality of wakefulness and the verification [derived] from it necessarily requires us to accept what we mentioned. Then [the perceptions of the senses] change due to afflictions upon them. The sum of this is that nature, the stars or foods, are unable to generate [the ability to see] and they do not contain that which requires such [but instead it is based on one's own non-afflicted senses]. For each of these, there is something harmful and something beneficial. What they contain of predominance and balance cannot exist due to nature or the stars, with respect to the wisdom and skilfulness from which they emerged in this state, and nature is incapable of this. The explanation of this has already been provided. *God is the grantor of success.*

On the Teachings of the Manicheans: An Exposition of their Incorrectness

[Shaykh] Abū Manṣūr said that the Manicheans[500] claimed that things exist as they come from a mixture of Light and Darkness. They were distinct; Light was high, boundless in all four directions, North, South, East and West, and Darkness was beneath in the same manner. On the side where they met, they came to an end. But the Darkness overtook the Light, and they mixed, and the Universe emerged out of their mixture in proportion to it. Each of them has five categories: Red, White, Yellow, Black and Green.[501] Everything that comes from this type of substance and came out of the essence of Light is good, and what comes out of the essence of Darkness is evil.

Similarly, each of them has five senses: Hearing, Sight, Taste, Smell and Touch. What the essence of Light perceives through them is good, and what the essence of Darkness perceives is evil. Light has a spirit and Darkness has a spirit. The spirit of Darkness is called '*Hamama*' and is living and covers the Universe in order to trap Light within it. The Light cannot be sensed and what is from it is due to [its] nature, and all of it is good. *Hamama* can be sensed. In addition, each of them attains its spatially determined boundaries. Then it was founded that the highest things [in position] are the purest, and the lowest things are the most polluted. Lightness and heaviness are also of this nature, and they tend

[500] The Manicheans were a group of Dualists whose founder was Mani.

[501] The Manicheans held that the Universe was the result of the mixture Light and Darkness. What made their dogma distinct was that they believed that the Light and Darkness had five categories; red, white, yellow, black and green. Whatever came out of these categories from the substance of Light was good and whatever came from the substance of Darkness was evil.

to mutual repulsion - since as time passes, light things rise higher and heavy things sink downwards. Since they are this way, they free themselves from the manner of their boundedness, just as they mixed.

[Shaykh] Abū Manṣūr said that whoever contemplates the claim finds that it is entirely contradictory and does not need one to indicate its falsehood other than to express it. The first thing [in respect to this issue] is that it removes the end from the sides [of Light and Dark] and affirms they have a side, so it makes the bounded unbounded, since the end is a limit, and a limit is a restriction of what is greater than it, which is the direction of another thing over it, which is evidence that a side from it is created. And that is a part, and it is unlikely that all the bounded parts are unbounded, because that notion is possible in every part from it and is connected. However, each of them [Light and Darkness], in the sides that are unbounded, either have the other in them - which invalidates the claim that 'they mixed from one side,' or they were mixed from one side first and then also from the other side, and if each of them did not remove themselves from the four sides that belong to the other, they became bounded on those sides.[502] *God is the grantor of success.*

Then, if it is of the nature of the lower to sink and of the higher to rise, which is due to the quality of mutual repulsion, this should affect the outcome [in that they should move away from one another]. Since how did the lower[503] start to rise when rising is the nature [only] of the pure and high, which is the quality of the good. Thus [it means that] both things came from below. Hence, the notion required by the argument

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[502] Al-Māturīdī is arguing that the Light and Darkness are finite and anything that is finite has been originated. Briefly, what this means is that finitude equivocates limits which are accidents. As al-Māturīdī explained previously, accidents - according to his own ideas - are originated.

[503] In the case of Manicheans' dogma, the Primal Darkness

for Dualism is invalid. Then it is the nature of the high [i.e. the primal Light] to escape upwards, and it did not fulfil this or withdraw from what sinks by nature until something rose above it - and the Universe was created by containing it. So how do they aspire to escape from the hands of *Hamama*? With this [the Light] is an active sensible thing [which is] bound, restricted and contained by tricks, and it does not have the strength to free itself, and by nature [the Light] did not withdraw when it was free [of Darkness], so how can it free itself after being bound? They said that *Hamama* frees its path, which would make [*Hamama*] a doer of good.[504]

Furthermore, the essence of Darkness, if it sees Light and is what associates with Light in order to contain it, is described as knowledge and sight, and not that which someone cannot see to fortify himself from it, and he does not know how to escape from its subjugation. Therefore, knowledge, vision, power, self-sufficiency, and honour are all in the essence of Darkness, and subjugation, ignorance, incapability, degradation and abasement are in the essence of Light. If the one is all Light, and the other is all Evil, then how perceptive of Good and Evil are you?[505]

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[504] Al-Māturīdī argues that if the nature of positionally lower things is to sink (in this case the primal Darkness of Manichaeism) and of higher things is to rise (such as the Light which is posited to be above the Darkness before the beginning of the Universe) and if these are mutually exclusive, then how does the lower Darkness ever rise - rising being a quality only of good - to mingle with the Light and create the Universe in the first place, as they claim? Which means that as a result the lower Darkness by rising, became both Light and Darkness, which negates their teaching concerning there being dual gods.

[505] Al-Māturīdī argues that if Darkness overcome Light, it would mean the Darkness possess attributes such as knowledge, power etc., which are meant to be exclusive to Light.

Likewise, according to your teaching, the act of Light is by nature, and the act of *Hamama* is by free will, and *Hamama* created the Universe, which invalidates the argument for Dualism.[506] Instead, the Universe is entirely the act of one being, but it mixed its parts with the parts of another. If this other, through which [mixing] was done became another [type of thing], [then] in order to complete the argument for Dualism, anything with a nature could be that through which and in which the Universe exists, which is an argument for Pluralism as opposed to Dualism.

Since Darkness was that which overtook Light and then Light freed itself from it, then [Light] escaping from it is by its essence is impossible, because it did not withdraw from it. This also requires the freeing of its parts from *Hamama's* containment, and there is no place higher to proceed to that has been wrested from [*Hamama*], since Light is boundless other than on this side, and by its freeing it returns to what is boundless and does not find a place of rest for itself. So the only meaning that its freeing has is that Darkness repels [Light] from itself, and then its repelling would be good, since its containment is evil. Therefore, if it repelled parts of it and what is higher is nothing other than its parts, then some of them intermix, and that is an end. However, [Darkness] was containing Light in its essence and then subjugated all of Light and imprisoned it for itself, containing its enemy within it so that its enemy becomes in its essence contained for itself.

Furthermore, Darkness has no limit except on the side of mixing, so to what end will Light free itself? This shows that there is no meaning to its freeing itself. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

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[506] Al-Māturīdī argues that because *Hamama* has free will and originated the Universe, then they are Monotheists as opposed to Dualists.

[Shaykh] Abū Manṣūr said that then it is bewildering that they claim that all light in the Universe is from the essence of Light, since from where does this derive when it is subjugated and contained? The act to contain it is entirely from another, so Light can only persist in the prison and bonds of another, so from where does it derive 'good'? - Unless it sees the rest of its parts that were not overtaken and throws its parts into the containment of the other's parts - which would be evil. If this is the case, then what about the King of Good, which serves entirely toward salvation and is not prevented [from its acts]?

Then the contradiction is that [the Manicheans] made a difference in the essence, so it is impossible for [Light and Darkness] to mix when they have distinct essences that subsist in their state, since [Manicheans] do not see mixture as anything other than this. However, it is said to [the Manicheans]; 'Is the mixture not after [Light and Darkness] came into existence? The answer must be 'yes.' It was said that; 'Was it Light or Darkness or something other than the two [that was the reason for creation]'? They argued the first two, because they affirmed the mixture and distinction for [both the Light and Darkness], and if that were possible, then it would be possible for them to exist together, which [would be a] clear [conclusion]. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

In terms of their belief with respect to [Light and Dark] meeting; they are either contiguous in pre-eternity or not contiguous. If they are contiguous, then [Manicheans also] argue that the contiguity is originated, since creation of the part necessarily entails creation of the whole by virtue of inference from the visible known to the unseen unknown. If they were not contiguous, one of them must necessarily have increased until it mixed with the other or deviated from the other in order to enter itself. Whichever of the two it is, there is an increase of

what [previously] was not or cutting off and insertion in an essence. Hence the claim that it [Light or Dark] is boundless is invalid, because if its parts were boundless, there would be no overlap with the other so that it became mixed - if it is capable of mixing, that proves that it is bounded. Moreover, it is unlikely that Darkness, with its bulk, overtakes Light with its low density [which can] withdraw from the Darkness, since [Light] is entirely full of things that are fine and cannot hold that which is thick. If this [mixing] was initiated by Light, then Light acquired evil and threw itself into containment with the stability of the dense [i.e. Darkness] in one essence. Instead, it finds the thin penetrating the thick if they are from different essences, between which remains an opening [between the thick and thin]. Meanwhile, [the Manicheans] did not explain what is the method [by which the thin penetrates the thick], therefore no [this cannot be accepted as a valid proposition]. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

If the mixing that occurred took place previously after there was nothing, then either it was through one of the two or through both of them, which entails the possibility of coming into existence, which would likewise be the case for everything; or it was neither of the two, since this entails proving a third being, or it was for themselves, and so it was necessary to deny the distinction [between Light and Darkness], or Darkness overtook itself, and the time [of its occurrence] was prior to [anything] that it is [claimed] [came] before it. If nothing happened in the two parts that did not mix, and the mixing did in fact occur, why did they not mix in their entirety? They cannot avoid separation - since the means of mixing is due to [their innate] nature, and natures do not change, so it must forever be this way. They expanded on the type of nature, but narrated that Darkness is active by choice, and thus calling this a 'nature' [when they mean 'of its own free will'] on this basis is defective. It was reported by them that Darkness moved until it

overtook Light, and so if they said 'forever', something is interjected into their speech that was never said about pre-eternity, and if they said 'at the beginning', then origination is required. *God is the grantor of success.*

Then there is complete ignorance in their claim; they free themselves because it is in the nature of the heavy to sink and light things to rise. [Yet] in the beginning, with these natures they [nonetheless] mixed. Unless each one of them had the nature of the other in terms of heaviness and lightness, it would be impossible for them to mix. If it were possible, then this indicates that these two natures were present in both. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

If one of them were capable of both, then either Good or Evil would be capable and the other's [claim of Divinity] would be void. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

However, since they made them both opposites in [their essential] natures, it is necessary to make one of them responsible for mixing and the other for in-betweenness, and [for] one of them prevail so that the situation would be like that. Then with regards to their claim [that], once they separate, they do not mix afterwards - what taught them that? We found certain amalgamations, so how is it that separation exists by effort? And what taught them that [Light and Dark] are forever in a state of separation and amalgamation, and likewise [exist in] pre-eternity? This invalidates the argument for Light and Dark.

Moreover, their judgement is bewildering, because according to them, they do not report on states that were and are from the essence of these two, and there was no knowledge of these two before their mixing, and no knowledge of how they separate. *God is the grantor of success.*

Then it is claimed, against every judgment, that they claim no end [for the Universe] in addition to what they said about the beginning of the

Universe, without there being Universe after Universe *Ad Infinitum*. [But] this is based on evidence, just as with mixing and separation, so they [well] know their stubbornness. It is said that they did not examine anything unmixed of Good and Evil, and they received no report that bears truthfulness. They said that we realised based on evidence that the characteristic of things is separation, and everything reverts to its Prime Matter.

Shaykh [Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī] said: Instead, it is argued that their tendency is to amalgamate, since if the end of everything occurs on the basis of its substance [this means] that it is amalgamated and [one can apply this] *Ad Infinitum*. It is said that since separation is dispersal and amalgamation is confirmation and strength, then why would their tendency not be amalgamation? *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

If it were possible to prove that which is not visible in the present Universe on the condition that [the Universe] is from the essence [of Light and Darkness], it would be possible to claim that the senses act in the opposite of the known way, or that perception is the opposite of what is perceived.

An objection was made to their claim that 'nothing but good proceeds from Light and nothing but evil proceeds from Darkness,' that if a man committed murder and then confessed it, then the person confessing is the same one who committed murder, which is truthfulness, so good was working through him after evil. If the confessor was other than the one who committed murder, then it is falsehood, which is evil, even if it came from goodness, as well as [allowing] the murderer to go [free]. It is likewise with the claim that 'each sense does not perceive what the other senses perceive.' Then concerning what someone hears, it is said 'I heard', or concerning what someone saw, it is said 'I saw', and one

does not say 'I saw and heard' [for something] other than that which can be seen or heard. That is the response to the claim of perceiving [something with a sense] that [it] cannot be perceived [with].

[The Manicheans] were asked about the blackness of the Darkness [namely]; if it increases over the blackness of Light, has the blackness increased at all? They said, 'no', [and thus] they made that which became much that which did not become much. If they said, 'it increased,' it is said [to them]; 'is it Light or Darkness or something other than the two?' If they reply, 'both Light and Darkness,' then Light and Darkness both increased, which is unlikely - since [this means] each of them increases in the essence of the other. If they said, 'something other than the two,' they prove that there is something other than the two.

Then what taught them that there is no increase in Light or Darkness over those five categories, when they do not know of all the parts of [Light and Dark], as there is no end to each one? If they claim inference from the visible known to the invisible unknown, this invalidates their argument for separation and the lack of an end [to a side], because they did not observe it. If they claim that that 'we know through Messengers,' it is said that since Messengers were parts of the Light, and Darkness hinders [them], what taught you that Darkness hadn't prevented and concealed reports about itself other than the five [components it is allegedly made up of], and so it is not known? If they claim concerning Light that it perceives through every sense what it perceives through the others, their claim of 'five senses' is void and it concludes as only one [sense]. Then incapability exists along with transmission, as with the rest of this, which thereby proves the difference.

Then it was objected with respect to the senses of the Darkness, that since they perceive what the senses of Light perceive, and everything is as it is, how can one of the perceptions be good and the other be bad?

Then the issue of pardoning the guilty was as an objection, [in terms of the question that] it is the work of whom? If they say, it is the act of Light; then it benefitted its enemy who is evil; if it is the act of Darkness, it is [performing the act of] pardoning, which is good. The foundational [principle] is that we observe in the visible Universe an ignorant man who gains knowledge, an erring man who regrets [his actions] and a man who makes a promise and goes back on his word. However, if the latter and the former [are found in one entity], this proves that the two opposite acts are from one, and if it was from other than it [they would not be unified in one essence], this proves the falseness of the report in the three ways [that we have explained]. *God is the grantor of success.*

On the Teachings of the *Dayṣāniyyah*: An Exposition of their Incorrectness

Shaykh [Abū Manṣūr] said that the *Dayṣāniyyah*[507] are like the *Manicheans* in principle, but they argued that Light is entirely white, and Darkness is entirely black; Light is living, and is that which mixed with Darkness when it was dead, due to the roughness that it found on the side [of Darkness] that it encountered, so it wanted to mix [with it] to devise a way to smooth it. And a smooth thing can become rough, just like steel can become rough from [being rubbed with] a saw. It is necessary to remove parts of it with a file and if such a fragment is removed and [the steel] levelled, it becomes smooth [again].

Some of them said 'no,' [the Light] is harmed by [Darkness] and so repelled [the Darkness] from itself, and mixed with it like one who is stuck in mud; if he struggles to escape, he only sinks further. The motion is from Light, and rest is from its opposite, since they are both opposites. Thus, the *Dayṣāniyyah* require two Prime Matters, [namely,] Light and Dark, and two derivations: the motion and sense of Light, and the rest and senselessness of Dark - without proving anything other than Light and Dark.

[Shaykh Abū Manṣūr] said that we have mentioned their teachings so that you may know God's hatred for those who preferred to be hostile to Him, who refused to obey God, did not contemplate His creation with thoughts submissive to God nor sought His aid so that He makes successful their religion and opens the door to truth for them. Instead, they inclined towards the Universe, relying on it out of desire for the

[507] The *Dayṣāniyyah* are another sect of Dualists that were founded by Ibn Dayṣān who was also known as Baredesanes.

appetites of their selves, so God entrusted them to themselves and did not preserve them from becoming His enemy, since they did not beseech God, and did not desire other than what they inclined to. *It is to God that we turn for aid.*

The rule is that God makes the destruction of His people through that by which [the person] claims his denial of God and refusal to obey God out of fear of a matter that adheres to [the person], such that it destroys [the person] by binding him to something he hopes to escape from. So these [the *Dayṣāniyyah*], because of their supposition that evil cannot emerge from the same source as good, came to argue for Dualism, and by making the foundation of each something other than the foundation of the other, then they made that which is the foundation of good to be in the end evil, and that which is the foundation of evil to be the end of good, because they made Light ignorant of the consequences of what it was heading towards, until they made one of two arguments by which they wanted to dispel its harm and remain in it; it does not know that it cannot, and not that it remains in the end of what it aimed to repel, and cannot free itself because it is stuck. The first [Light] proceeded to [Darkness] in order to smooth its roughness and repel its harm out of ignorance of the fact that it does not have power over it and cannot free itself from it. This is like the Manichean argument that Darkness is what overtook Light and threw it into its containment and bound it with restraints until it became ignorant of its origin and was unable to escape. The beginning of all good, the end of knowledge, and the understanding and attainment of all good is rather through power over it. Thus, they removed both [good and evil] from Light and attributed them to Darkness. They went over to the opposite of all they built by claiming that good is entirely from both of them, so they made Light emerge from the greater part of good, and the other from the greater part of evil, then they affirmed both for one, and for this one they argued for Dualism.

So let it be known how each sect is destroyed by that which it supposes is its salvation. *God is the grantor of success.*

If it is for these two sides that it is necessary to claim Dualism, then it is also necessary to claim that there are four fundamental essences such as natures, since they are opposed and each harms the other. And if it is necessary to claim four, then it is also necessary to claim six, since a thing existing necessarily has six directions, which necessarily entails arguing for seven, since the thing bearing those directions cannot be described by having a direction that preceded it, or it is necessary to argue for five, due to the fact that the thing in which those natures amalgamate is the fifth, and it is not described as 'hot' or 'cold'.[508] And if it was as the Dualists say, then it is necessary to claim a third, because the two existed when the Universe did not exist and nor did good or evil [exist], and it is impossible for a self-existent being to mix by itself without amalgamation or contradiction, which proves that there is a [third], a being other than those two, through whom all good and evil exists. So their claim is invalid with respect to what they attempted to prove.

On the other hand, the [the view that a person] is not being compelled [to act in one way meaning good or bad] means the existence of the other [meaning God]. The basis of this is that the intellects of those people have not reached the extent of understanding things that Divine

[508] Al-Māturīdī is arguing that the position of the *Dayṣāniyyah* is flawed because if they argue that there can be two opposites that are the reason for the existence of the Universe, then why can the four fundamental natures not be the reason for the existence of the Universe, because they also have opposing natures? Or why can it not be six because all things in the present Universe are subjected to the six directions, or seven because of the thing that bears the directions, or five - because the Four Natures being brought together would be because of the fifth that is external to them; and why can it not be that there were originally three, because it required a third that brought the Light and Darkness together?

Wisdom possesses, and they supposed that God possesses the same qualities as them in terms of needs, appetites, and the possibility of bearing afflictions and defects, so they determined God's action by that which they [themselves] know as wisdom in their own actions. If they contemplated the concealed necessities they are in, that hinder them from understanding things, as well as their own interests, they would take great pains and strive to know that it is ignorance which prevents them from understanding the wisdom within them. They are the people who most properly should undertake this, since they claimed that the Universe is a mixture of Light and Darkness, and that there is no part of Light that is not mixed with a part of Darkness, and Darkness conceals and then subjugates the Light. So [then] there is no good that can be hoped to come into being from it but that Darkness subjugates it and conceals it from [the] manifestation of all of its members; then how is it possible for them to know and consider the path to wisdom so that they can claim that the other is evil?

The bewildering thing is that their Light, with its self-subsistence and purity from the defects of Darkness, did not know what it faces [when] mixing, in terms of hardship and oppression, ignorance and incapability. Then how is it hoped that a part of it, when it emerges from its essence and falls into the hands of its enemy, would apply to it the wisdom that it did not attain when it was whole? And the most justified of those who do not claim wisdom or debate those who do profess wisdom or attempt wisdom is the Dualist, since he refers back to the two Prime Matters in himself which are good and evil, as does anyone among [them]. If attempting and speaking of wisdom is from the essence of Light, then according to them there are two wise beings for whom nothing is concealed, and there is no sense in the both of them speaking [and attempting] wisdom as the [both of them, namely Light and Darkness] will then in [their essence] be the same, or if [it is] from the essence of

Darkness, when it is impossible for both of them to bear wisdom, or one of them is the essence of Light and the other is the essence of Darkness. It is impossible for one to bear ignorance and the other to bear knowledge, and so speaking [about this] is vain and meaningless. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God*

[Shaykh] Abū Manŝūr said that the principle is that whoever performs an act that he does not benefit from or performs it for the destruction or annihilation of a thing, is shameful. God would not benefit from what He creates because God is above needs and is self-sufficient in Himself from other than Himself. So it is false to say that God's act was so that He can benefit from it. Then if it were for nothing but destruction, His creation would be meaningless; hence it is proven that God created and formed the Universe for certain consequences. Then the creation of creatures whom God did not give the power to distinguish or grasp the consequences of things proves that God did not create them for themselves. And He created creatures that know this and seek by their every act benefits of consequences, even those whose action deviates from [this benefit]. Since God is what everything other than Him needs, and God is wise in His action, they must love Him so as not to lose the blessings of the Creator for them, in terms of [Man's God given] reason that grasps the consequences [of actions] - because if [people] were left to their own direction, they would not allow themselves to vacillate in that which does not bring benefit now or praise later, and whoever treats them in the same way is foolish and ignorant. If it is necessary to create the harmful and the beneficial due to the requirements of wisdom, and God created substances that can experience pain and pleasure, and the arising of pains and pleasures, so that they know what their soul desires and recoils from, so they are cautious and desirous of the like in those things where they are put to the test; and so that they know benefit from harm, without which their creation would have no meaning, God created

them on the basis of the difference He created for [benefit and harm]. Then out of His kindness, God created every substance capable of receiving benefit and harm, and of doing it to another. God conveyed the benefit of every substance to other substances that contained harms, so that observers would know that the designer of all this is One, and that if they were from different [designers], then [their] creations would clash; because if only good came out of the essence of good, and only evil out of the essence of evil, the work of each would be in some of the work of the other [as they are amalgamated in the present Universe], and would corrupt what it undertakes with what [is similar to it]. The harmony and dependence of benefits on one another indicate the falseness of this [belief]. However, if we cannot say that [both good and evil] derive from one, we could not say [that] there are multiple gods either, since on their own, one of them could not make a proof to indicate his existence, or [provide] a sign to point to him, and through that is similar to him, [provide] true experience of him, and knowledge of his state would not be necessary, and this would corrupt all knowledge, due to ignorance of the Prime [Matter], that all types of knowledge and its branches derive from.[509]

Furthermore, the presence of one of the essences [Light and Darkness] in one body is beneficial, and the presence of the other is harmful, which

[509] Here al-Māturīdī is referring to the same argument he made earlier in the book, in that if there were multiple gods, there would be conflict between them, with one god being prevented by other gods from providing a sign of his existence. There is the additional argument that was made by al-Māturīdī about how multiple gods cannot be responsible for the Universe as there would be a conflict with each of them wanting to create their own creation. He further explains that the Universe is as a result of a wise and knowledgeable creator and it is on this basis that God gave people things such as knowledge in order to know Him. On the other hand, if the Universe came from Prime Matter which in itself is ignorant, this conflicts with things such as knowledge being in the Universe.

means that harm encounters benefits, which means that benefit is entirely negated due to the presence of that which precludes it. In the existence of the Universe and what is in it, both of them [i.e. Light and Darkness] have benefit, which indicates the truth that the designer of all this is one, due to the holding back of any harmful thing from God's operation (in respect of its harm) through His kindness, in order to attain the benefit God intended for whomsoever He intended to benefit. And the same goes for those God intends to harm. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

It is known that intellects are not composed for food and drink, because what is not for the intellect in these things is stronger than what is for the intellect, and due to the great rank of a group that stayed away from food and drink, namely the angels.[510] So it is proven that [intellects] were created for instruction and inquiry, because of the praise and honour they hold. If that is so, then it is necessary to create various substances in wisdom so that the path of instruction is complete, and the truth of inquiry is abundant. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

In the visible world, it is known that whoever knows both things is more complete, or rather a person cannot be wary of what harms him if he does not know it. On this basis, the creation of both [benefit and harm] in wisdom is more necessary and more complete than the creation of just either one of them alone. This is evidence of the self-sufficiency of

[510] A person's spiritual rank is not based on the consumption of food and this can be seen from the angels who have a high rank and are not in need of food or drink. Instead, a person's rank is based on the use of the intellect, which has no connection to the consumption or lack of consumption of food. The intellect was created for instruction and inquiry. Based on God's wisdom, things were created so that a person can fulfil the role of the intellect, which is the application of instruction and inquiry.

the doer and God's perfect might and knowledge of the rightful place that all things should be. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

If the monotheists did not have anything but the evidence of the truthfulness of those who preached monotheism and the luminous proofs with them, namely the Prophets, which [is a proof that] none of those who deny the existence of one Creator possess, [then this proof] would be enough. How, when there is nothing that does not in its essence observe that it is originated, and so created by a wise creator? If it were not for the atheists' stubborn insistence in claiming the pre-eternity of corporeal substances, which there is no way for them to prove other than by accepting the authority of someone who has no proof, or by making his foolishness to be proof for him, even when he is incapable of understanding the existence of something that does not emerge from something [else]. There is no doubt that all of them know that they themselves have been ignorant of things and then knew them; and have been incapable of things and then became capable, and in need of things and then became without [having a] need of them. Hence the reality of one with this description is that he does not trust his opinion and does not follow what he sees to be the indication of his reason.

Whoever attributes this to natures that do not comprehend what is generated from them and by them, or to stars, or to a number of creators - the beginning of whose work was ignorance and blindness, or to acceptance of the authority of teachings on the pre-eternity of things, as they are in contradiction and opposition - such a person and those similar to him are necessarily stupid and ignorant, since how can they be rational using proofs from these irrelevant principles of which they are the derivations, or consider the realities of things until they claim that a thing possesses wisdom, the path to it, or foolishness? *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

However, what led the Dualists to deny that a thing can emerge from nothing is that it deviates from what reason can conceive, or the fact that in seeking wisdom based on reason they only considered what they examined among themselves. If they knew that claiming the origin of the Universe on the basis of their view, which is a deviation from what [reason] can comprehend, is similar to that which they denied, or they knew that which accompanies it in terms of soul, reason and senses, or [that] their judgment itself deviates from what the [mind] can conceive, [then] they would not deny it. Then if they knew that they witnessed the behaviour of the weak and the ignorant in themselves, based on what they knew by transmission - that they were non-existent and then existent - they would know that the existence of things after they did not exist is more properly attributed to the One through whom the whole Universe exists. Then if they knew God's self-sufficiency, His power and that God is above being described as 'created', their hearts would not be aggrieved when they are unable to grasp the wisdom in His creation. *From God, we ask for help, and to God, we turn for aid.*

It was reported that Ja'far ibn Harb[511] asked a Dualist about a person who killed another wrongfully and then apologised for the crime and acknowledged his wrongdoing. He is forced to admit that the second act is good, and if the essence of the first act were from someone else, it would be a falsehood by the Light, which would be evil. He wrote this to one of their leaders, and the leader wrote in response that this is like one whose beast kicks [some bystander] and he apologises [on behalf of the beast]. Jafar said that rather, this is compassion from him, and if he apologised for real, he is ignorant, unless the excuse was for making the beast his friend. So the man conceded, and it was right for him to

[511] Ja'far ibn Harb (d. 850) was a follower of the School of the *Mutazalites*. He has been mentioned '*Kitab Makalat al-Islamin*' ('*Treatises on Islam*') of Abū al-Ĥasan al-'Ashʿarī.

concede, and what [Jafar] Ibn Harb mentioned is necessary. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

Then the question as to the claim of the *Mutazalites* is incorrect, since it is part of their school that there is no evil in God's creation, and that rather He gave the name 'evil' figuratively. Meanwhile, their method of debating the Dualists is to deny that what they supposed to be evil is [in fact] evil. As for the fact that they concede to the Dualists and [yet] require them to claim one creator, in such a way that there are other than [good and evil] in God, and they ascribe [evil] to God even after they denied this [ascription of evil], then this is an impossible and defective [position by the *Mutazalites*], because it proves God's Knowledge and Oneness in creating good and evil, but then they deny one of them [namely evil], so that the issue reverts to the Dualists' argument that evil is created by something other than that which created good, so [the *Mutazilites*] are forced to be 'monotheist dualists'. The way they can claim this is that they deny the creation [by God] of the acts of God's servants, with the offences, sins and evil they contain. In objection, it was argued that evil was created from substances and it was not called 'evil' or 'bad' or a 'corruptor in the corruption of things', so it is the same case for the acts of evil and corruption, in that they are not called as such. They responded that the substances were called evil figuratively and not in reality and in reality, they are not evil.[512]

According to our belief, we say that God is the creator of the essence of evil and good and [He is the] creator of good and evil acts [as well]. It is not possible for something to be in God's dominion that He did not create, since it would be a partner to God in His dominion and an equal

[512] This is the same teaching that was relayed previously in relation to the *Mutazalites* - namely that humans have complete autonomy of their acts and the evil acts are a by-product of human autonomy and do not come from God.

in creating His Universe. God's Divinity is beyond [such ascription]. We say that the creation of creation is not [the same as] that [first] creation, and it is a similar case for God's acts, in that His act is not described with [the terms] good and evil, and God is not described by the fact that His acts are good or evil, because God is described by His act. We did not say that God was good or evil, nor [is] the one whose act is such called [good and evil]. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God,*

What is necessary for wisdom in terms of creating harmful substances and repulsive sights, and the creation of afflictions of the senses, [is that] this is because all human beings have believed [in] something that is unperceived by their senses, either in denial or affirmation; some of whom professed the truth, and some of whom feigned ignorance and pursued their appetites. If He did not create those things above those which strike their senses, they would not know ugliness from beauty or harm from benefit. If they did not understand this, then their reason would not be able to distinguish ugliness from beauty and harm from benefit. Hence God created things in this way, so that they show through what assaults the senses that which is not perceived by them, so that every object of belief that is out of sight becomes known as it is through what is visible. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God,*

Then whoever negates [the view of] the Dualists, [despite] all their divergent [opinions], what they all agreed on was their propagation of [the existence of] the essence of Light, [even though] they varied [on what this essence was]. If they are telling the truth then their differences [are because of this issue], and if they are lying, then the entire issue is false. And likewise, if some of them are telling the truth and some of them are lying. So it is proven that those who are of the essence of Darkness prefer the Light to the point that they chose to affiliate with it

in place of Darkness,[513] and preferring something with excellence is good in the observation of reason, so this entails invalidation of the claim that nothing but evil comes from Prime Matter that is evil, and good does not come from other than good. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

[513] As some Dualists say the Darkness chose to mix with the Light.

On the Teachings of the Marcionites: an Exposition of their Incorrectness

The Marcionites[514] argued that Light is up high and Darkness is down below, and in the middle between them, there is neither Light nor Darkness, but rather sensitive, perceptive humankind. In their view, mankind is life in a body, and that these three were separate and then mixed, and that each category of them imitates what follows it like the shadow follows the Sun; the middle imitates the Light and what is below it [imitates] the Darkness, and the two substances do the same in mutual imitation in the view of [the Marcionites].

The Sabians'[515] claim is like that of the Manicheans, except - according to [Muhammad] Ibn Shabib - between them there is a slight difference that he does not specify. The Manicheans claimed that Light encounters Darkness from the North heading South, and that Darkness encounters it from the South heading North. Furthermore, they meet each other on one side where some Darkness enters within Light, and they are boundless on the other sides. So he spoke about them in that same manner that he spoke about the Dualists, after asking from [what] did they argue [for this].

Then the middle area is necessarily an arrangement from which the Universe derives, or it came into being from out of the amalgamation

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514 The Marcionites are another sect of Dualists and were founded by Marcion.

515 Al-Māturīdī is mentioning the Sabians in terms of believing in Dualism. But in the Quran they are mentioned as believers in God such as in the following verse of the Holy Quran: *"Indeed, those who believed and those who were Jews or Christians or Sabians - those [among them] who believed in God and the Last Day and did righteousness - will have their reward with their Lord, and no fear will there be concerning them, nor will they grieve."* (Quran, Surah *al-Baqarah* (2:62))

[of Darkness and Light]. If it was by design, this invalidates the mixing, since where would this take place when it is between Light and Darkness? Darkness has a tendency to sink, and Light has a tendency to rise, and between them, there is a divider than hinders, unless there is a combination and mixing between them by design, so it was the origin of all evil, since it was [caused] by mixing. If there had not been mixing between them, neither of them would have found a path to the other, so this leads to the conclusion that the designer of good and evil is one. If they were both prevailing by nature and subjugated the middle until they mixed, then its sense and perception were of no benefit to it, since it came under the subjugation of something with [only] a nature [and no consciousness], so the fact that it is a middle is meaningless, and the whole matter amounts to [only] Light and Darkness.

Then he said that they made the middle bounded and the other two boundless, and the bounded under the boundless, because it is like that which falls short of all that is boundless, and like the short with respect to the long. And a human being, if he is the life that is in a body, then he is sensible of the body and uses it, and so the middle must be that which directs the higher, and the lower, which [the life that is in the body] is the user of. Therefore, in reality, the [two] gods would become one, and the mixing and what was said about imagination [existing in the middle] would be void. Then [Man's] reference to the mixing [of Light and Dark], which is [the purported cause of] his life, is an error - since no man knows the design of his beginning, nor does he know the optimum [configuration] of what is corrupted, or how to repel what befalls him. This proves that the designer is One, and that He is other than what was said [by them], and that what was mentioned is under the design of this One.

Then there is no difference between a mixture that did not exist coming into being out of Prime [Matter] that is not a mixture, and between a separation that did not exist coming into being out of a Prime [Matter], that is a mixture [or in between]. Then, there is no difference between enabling a change that took place to bear accidents, after it was not such, through the power of a capable being, and between the accidents being through God's Essence, not by transferring to the pre-eternal [the] meaning of being created, since both [the Power and the Essence of God] are one in their distance from the sight and the [mind].

On the Teachings of the Magians: an Exposition of their Incorrectness

[Shaykh] Abū Manṣūr said that the Magians[516] said that God was pleased by the excellence of His creation and He feared what opposes it and after that [He had a] thought, and from this thought, Satan came into being. Some of them said that [Satan] struck God in His eye, and He turned around and saw Satan and reached an agreement with him to give him a period of time [i.e. a respite] and [God] reached an agreement with Satan on this basis, until the allotted time expires, and God destroys him. Thus, all evil is from Satan, and from God [comes] all good.

This is the story that they told. Their claim was to understand evil based on Dualism, since Dualists argued for two essences, because they believed that the creation of something from nothing is not conceivable in the [mind] and the claim that the Universe came into existence from nothing was too great [a leap] for them. Then they saw that the Universe contains good and evil, with everything whose act is good and just being described with praiseworthy attributes and anyone whose act is evil and oppressive being described with blameworthy attributes, and they thought it was too great a claim for both to be attributed to one [Divine] being, so that it would be one being that is worthy of both praise and blame at the same time, as is customary. Therefore, they claimed that there are two pre-eternal essences.

The Magians determined that it was possible for the Universe to be created out of nothing and [it did not come from] Prime Matter. But for them it was an enormity to describe the one from whom all good things proceed as doing evil, so they did not require it to be the act of a God

[516] The Magians are another sect of Dualists, who were followers of Zoroastrianism.

of evil, but they [nonetheless] made Him its origin, since a base thought is evil and what arises from it, such as Satan, is evil and was from God. So this proves that both [good and evil] proceed from God, which is the reason that led them to argue for two beings, so their claim is contradictory. Furthermore, it is not believed that thought proceeds from God time after time, as all evil would be like that. If it is meant that [thoughts coming from God] is impossible, the existence [of evil] once again refutes the impossibility, unless the claim is that the origin of good is a thought that is good. However, if God bid Satan farewell to leave for that duration, then either God did not know that [Satan] would do the evil that he does, and ignorance is evil, and so God is another evil, or God knew and allowed him to sow corruption, and that is evil from God. Likewise, either God knew beforehand what His thought would do and so [still] thought [it] fully knowing what would proceed from it, which is evil, or God did not know, and ignorance is evil. Then God is necessarily either able to prevent and subjugate Satan, or He is not [able to do so]. If God is capable, and He decreed [Satan] to corrupt creation, then God is evil, and if He is not capable, then the Lord of the Universe cannot be incapable.[517]

Furthermore, it is said that then God knew that Satan, during this time, would be faithful to what [Satan] promised. But fulfilling a promise is

[517] Some may argue that the idea that God decreed Satan to corrupt creation is a belief held by Muslims. This is the case for the theological groups that do not believe in free will, but for those that do, such as Māturīdī and the *Mutazalites*, then they believe that Satan chose to corrupt creation based on his own free will and God merely gave him leave to try and do this i.e. God didn't order or decree Satan to corrupt creation. The fact that evil and good exist is interlinked with the concept of human free will and being tested by God. If there were only good, then there would be no free will as people would be free only to perform good acts. Therefore, the creation of evil is so that a person has free choice in their actions and thus a person's acts can be tested and recompensed in the Hereafter.

good and right, so this would be from evil. This was necessary for the Magians, because if evil proceeded from He who is the origin of good, we could argue the contrary and make all good proceed from Satan, and all evil from other than him.[518]

Moreover, how can God be sure that He would have power over [Satan], at a time when Satan had none other than himself for assistance, and the One from whom [Satan] proceeded had all things for assistants? Then [Satan's] creation who [became] his assistants was mixed with those who are assistants of God, which prevented them from assisting [God]. May God's Divinity be above the description [that is applied by] these non-believers. If they said that the agreement was for certain advantages, then it is a similar case for harmful vermin and things [that cause] damage.

Furthermore, God's fear that someone oppose Him entails ignorance of the fact that He is Lord of everything, as does the idea that His eye was struck, since in this case His eye would be harmed, and one whose eye can be overpowered, whose power be deprived, and whose knowledge can be refuted, is lord through other than himself and not in himself, and is creator through other than himself. Hence it must be claimed about their deity that he is a servant and not a deity.

There is no harmful substance but that it [also] benefits creation, since they did not become harmful except through a wise, knowing designer who made them so as to harm one person and benefit another. This proves that the claim that the creator of evil is separate is unlikely.

Then, if there was nothing in the creation of a thing (from [something] other than it) except its emergence from the capacity of creation and its

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[518] Al-Māturīdī is demonstrating that unlike the Dualists, the Monotheists do not see evil as an equivalent to God. It was the fact that Dualists did not want to ascribe evil to God and viewed it as equivalent to good that resulted in their view that there were two Gods.

elevation from conceptualisation, then no one refrained from arguing that the same could be realised [by God], because the emergence of the body and its existence in the womb by nature, its creation by the motions of the stars, or the emergence of the Universe from this nature, and the mixing of Light and Darkness followed by separation - all of this emerges in the way mentioned above. However, whoever contemplates the reality of everything finds it to be this way, because there is not in a drop of sperm, or in all foodstuffs, or in wombs, any of the qualities of a human being in terms of reason, hearing, and sight.[519] Rather, these things emerge from them by the determination of a wise, knowing being. It is a similar case with all the different natures or the essences of good and evil. If they are separated from their action such that an essence becomes manifest and creation cannot be through them, the claim that it is through something similar is difficult to conceive. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

We have explained the manner of wisdom in the creation of different substances, and that the act of God cannot be described by that, and that their creation in terms of the ugliness of the ugly and the beauty of the beautiful is an indication of wisdom and harmony. In addition, that God, since He did not create for His own needs but rather through His own Essence, is a Creator, so that the creation is that in which God composed intellects and made them people of knowledge and blessings

[519] Here al-Māturīdī is summarising his arguments that the nature of the Universe indicates that there is a wise and knowledgeable designer. He argues that food, semen and the womb etc. cannot in themselves hear or see or apply reason, but instead these abilities emerge in humans due to a wise and knowing designer. Furthermore, he argues that all the alternative and rival positions for the emergence of the Universe also allow for the possibility of God being the ultimate creator. For example, the emergence of the body and its existence in the womb by nature, the alleged creation of the Universe by the motions of the stars, or the mixing of Light and Darkness followed by separation are all because of God being the ultimate cause of everything.

and trials by which they are tested by putting each thing in its [rightful] place and giving thanks for the blessings they receive. In that, God made for them all creatures in their different essences as evidence, lessons and a trial in opposition to other substances and loyalties, and so that they know how to fear and the manner of caution and the terror [contained] within it. Also, the ways of proceeding from it to praiseworthy outcomes in the intellect, and fearing others for a hateful thing from it, through the different substances and states they examined in invitation and intimidation. Thus, the promise and the threat [of the Hereafter] are considered by the senses and observation, since that is the path of knowledge, through which they attain understanding of ultimate ends. *There is no strength to find the truth except by God.*

If it is possible to deny the creation of something from nothing on the basis that it is inconceivable in the [mind], then it would be possible for anyone with a defected sense to deny what is perceived thereby - since it is not perceived, and to deny every unseen thing that does not reach the senses. This negates the Magians and others, since they all followed their predecessors. Conceivability in the [mind] is its consideration of what the sense hits upon when the sense is removed, so one conceives the state of the sense in one's [mind] or considers something similar. But God is not known by way of the senses, and He has no like in the known Universe, and so consideration based on [the senses] is void.

Then the basis of this is that conceiving in the [mind] is knowledge of the senses, or the knowledge of senses contains evidence for the necessity of knowledge of what is not sensed because it is known; since everything with sense is ignorant of the what and how of the sense. This is necessary in anyone who is such, so the senses must [come into existence] through whoever knows their realities and creates them in such a way that sensory beings see that the one who created them cannot

be grasped through the senses, since everything with senses is ignorant of their own states and is incapable of bearing the corrupt among them. This requires that there be a wise, knowing being behind this, who does not bear the attributes of what is perceptible by the senses, since if that were possible and God bore those attributes, it would not be possible for what is perceptible by the senses to exist through Him, just as it would not be possible for those [senses to be] like our [senses]. *Through God is protection and salvation.*

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to the following people who financially contributed to the production of this book: Mohammad Tahir Akbar and Family, Raseen Peerzade and Family, Rouf Ditta and Family, Soneel Minhas and Family, Abdul Raheem Ahmed and Family, Haji Mohamed Jaffer and Family, Ismaeel Hussain and Family.

I would also like to acknowledge the following people who helped with various aspects of the book, such as translating difficult passages and sections, helping with the various manuscripts, editing, the cover of the book and general support which allowed me time to produce the book: Daud Yaqub, Muhammad Rahman, Aqsa Aaminah Ahmed, Shahreen Ahmed, Mahmut Bogan, Rouf Ahmed Ditta, Nouman Hussain, Kiran Khalid, Henna Ali, Khadija Podd, Kirren Amin, Saba Shakeel, Samreen Majid, Atabek Sukurov, Kiran Hussain, Shakoor Ahmed, Sadiq Muhammed, Shaheen Ahmed, Saira Shah Ayesha Choudary, Naseeem Hussain, Zunara Majeed Jabbar and Sultan Mujahid Jabbar. All contributions, whether great or small, are valued.

I am grateful to my family and friends, whose help and love was the greatest support. I am deeply indebted to the person who helped support me with the book and without whom the book would never have been produced. Despite the fact that he wants to remain anonymous, he has displayed the true meaning of friendship, and I am forever grateful.

Glossary

Aĥad **(أَحَد)**: A chain of narration in which the number of narrators, in each generation never reaches the number of *mashhūr* or *mutawātir* (see below).

Ahl al-Sunnat wa al-Jamāʿah **(أَهْلُ السُّنَّةِ وَالْجَمَاعَة):** {*Also called – Ahl al-Sunnah/Sunni*} The 'people of the *Sunnah* and the consensus of the Muslims'. The largest body of Muslims in the world yet they too in reality exist in sub-sects that differ in polemics as well as major issues. Many hold the claim that they are Sunni but it is logically evident that some differences in fundamental issues, such as beliefs about God, render them as completely opposed to one another. Therefore, arguably they are similar in their reverence of the *Ŝaĥabah* as a body, their acceptance of certain collections of *hadith* and their adopting *Ijmāʿ* (or at least the *Ijmāʿ* of *Ŝaĥabah*) as a source of Islam. More accurately, Sunnis have been defined as those that hold beliefs in accordance to the Ashʿarī or Māturidī theological schools.

ʿAqīda **(عَقِيدَة):** Islamic Theology – the theory, study and codification of beliefs or 'dogmas of the religion'.

Ashʿarī **(أَشْعَرِي)**: The school of theology codified by Imam Abu Al-Hassan Al Ashʿarī (d. 324/936), a theologian who left the beliefs of the *Mu'tazalites*. He based his school on various teachings of the early generations (*Tābiʿīn* and *Taba' al-Tābiʿīn*) and his theology strongly opposes the *Mu'tazalites*. The Ashʿarī School is recognised historically as part of *Ahl al-Sunnat wa al-Jamāʿah*.

Faqīh **(فَقِيه):** The jurists in Islamic Law (see *Fiqh*)

Farđ **(فرض):** An obligatory act that the believer is required to perform. All such acts will have prerequisite conditions and rules. The one who

fails to perform the act will incur sin. However, denial of the necessity of a *Farḍ* will constitute disbelief.

***Fiqh* (فِقْه):** Jurisprudence – the theory, study and application of law through legal principles.

***Fuqahā'* (فُقَهَاء):** Plural of *Faqīh* (see above).

***Hadith* (حَدِيْث):** literally means 'speech', in *hadith* terminology it is something from the Prophet Muhammad. The *Matn* ('content') and *Sanad* ('chain') combined together make a *hadith* (see below).

Hanafi (حَنَفِي): Legal school based upon the principles of Imam Abu Hanifa Numan bin Thabit (died 148 AH/767 CE). Imam Abu Hanifa is the earliest of the Jurists (*Fuqahā'*) whose school of thought survives today.

Hanbali (حَنْبَلِي): {*Pronounced as 'Hambali'*} Legal school based on the principles derived by followers of Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal (died 241 AH/855 CE).

***Ĥarām* (حرام):** An act that is prohibited. To commit the act incurs sin. To deny the impermissibility of any act that is proven to be *Ĥarām* constitutes disbelief.

***'Ijtihād* (اِجْتِهَاد):** The linguistic meaning is the exertion or endeavour on a task. In Islamic terminology, it means independent judgment in a legal or theological question, based on the interpretation and application of principles (see *Uṣūl*) to the sources of Islam (Qur'an, *Sunnah* and *Ijmā'*).

***Ijmā'* (اِجْمَاع):** The consensus of the Islamic community on a legal, theological, or historic issue.

Innovator (بدعة): An innovator is someone who affirms or denies that which is not/is within the religion of Islam. An innovator could be a heretic or in a severe scenario a disbeliever. For Hanafis it is anyone who has beliefs that are contrary to the Ash'arī or Māturidī creeds or he/she denies a *mashhūr hadith* or goes against *Ijmā'* ('consensus').

Islam (إسلام): Belief according to the theologians is the testifying by the tongue and affirmation of the heart. However, practically to establish if someone is a Muslim, we need to look at the outward signs that someone is a believer.

***'Isnād* (إسْنَاد):** Plural of *Sanad* (see below).

***'Isrā'* (إسْرَاء):** In the Quran, in Chapter 17 (called *Al-'Isrā'*) and verse 1, we are told about the miraculous night journey of the Prophet Muhammad from Mecca to the 'Farthest Mosque', which is in the city of Jerusalem.

***Ka'bah* (كَعْبَة):** The sacred cubical structure in the city of Mecca. It is the holiest site of Islam, the direction that worshippers face to pray the 5 daily prayers and the point of circumambulation in the Holy Pilgrimages to Mecca.

***Khawārij* (خوارج):** Literally the 'ones who exited'. The name given to an early group of heretics who disobeyed the rulers (an act contrary to *Ahl al-Sunnat wa al-Jamā'ah*) and declared war upon Muslims. *Khawārij* are typically known to declare *Kufr* (disbelief) on other Muslims over matters that Sunnis do not recognise as *Kufr*.

***Kufr* (كفر):** Disbelief.

***Madhhab* (مَذْهَب):** School of Thought based on a particular set of *Uṣūl* (principles).

Maliki (مَالِكِي): Legal school based upon the principles of Imam Malik ibn Anas (died 179 AH/795 CE).

***Mashhūr* (مَشْهُور):** In Arabic *mashhūr* means 'famous'. In *hadith* terminology this refers to any *hadith* that became widespread during the time of the *Tābi'īn* or *Taba' al-Tābi'īn*. The *hadith* in this category however start as *aḥad* narrations hence they differ to *Mutawātir*.

Māturidī (مَاتُرِيْدِي): The school of theology codified by Imam Abu Mansur Al-Māturidī (d. 333 Hijri) based on Imam Abu Hanifa's

teachings and recognised historically as part of *Ahl al-Sunnat wa al-Jamāʿah.*

***Miʿrāj* (مِعْرَاج):** This is the name given to the second part of the miraculous Night Journey from the Farthest Mosque (Masjid Al-Aqsa) to the Heavens. The people of *Ahl al-Sunnat wa al-Jamāʿah* affirmed its existence based on multiple *aĥad* narrations.

***Muĥadīthūn/ Muĥadīthīn* (مُحَدِّيثِين/مُحَدِّيثُون):** These are the specialists in the science of *hadith. Muĥadīthūn* narrate *hadith* and maintain knowledge of *Muŝtalaĥ al-Ĥadith.*

***Mujtahid* (مُجْتَهِد):** The literal linguistic meaning is 'diligent' or 'industrious'. In Islamic usage it is the title given to a legist formulating independent decisions in legal or theological matters. There are several categories of *Mujtahidūn* (plural) with each category being restricted to the extent of their scope in carrying out *'Ijtihād* (see above).

***Mutawātir* (مُتَوَاتِر):** The linguistic meaning of *Mutawātir* is 'sequential'. In *hadith* terminology it means a *hadith* narrated by such a large number of people in each generation (of narrators) that it would be impossible for them to collude on a lie. There is no agreed upon specific minimum number of narrators in each generation.

***Muʿtazilah* (مُعْتَزِلَة):** Theological school based on rationalist principles first ascribed to the theology of Wasil ibn Ata who is known for his belief in the "state between two states" regarding major sinners. They are Hanafi in jurisprudence. *Mu'tazilites* disputed with Ahmed bin Hanbal on the issue of the Qur'an and whether it is a created or a non-created entity.

***Mutazalite*:** A follower of the *Muʿtazilah* theology (see above).

Narrations (الخَبَرُ): *'Khabr'* is a report or 'news'. In the Science of Hadith this is synonymous with hadith.

Qiyyās **(قِيَّاس):** Linguistically, this is analogy. In Islamic terminology this is the use of deductive analogy from the Quran and *Sunnah* to create rulings for situations that are new or not found in the text.

Ŝaĥabah **(صَحَابَة):** Literally companions. This is the generation of believers at the time of the Prophet (PBUH). According to *Muĥadīthūn* they are defined as those who believed in the Prophet, met him and died in that state. There are however additional constraints placed by the scholars of *Uŝūl.*

Salaf **(سَلَف):** The first three generations of the Muslims; they are the *Ŝaĥabah, Tābiʿīn and Tabaʿ al-Tābiʿīn.* Their ranks, as a group, have been mentioned in an authentic *hadith.*

Sanad **(سَنَد):** Literally means to 'put something against the place on which you rely', but in *hadith* it refers to the chain of narrators that transmitted the *hadith.* Each narrator has to possess intellect (*ʿAql*), Memory (*Ðabt*), Belief (*Islam*), and Righteousness (*ʿAdālah*). Two consecutive narrators in a chain must have met each other and they must observe certain rules during the process of passing the *hadith* from teacher to student.

Shafi'i (شَافِعِيّ): Legal school based upon the principles of Imam Abu Abdullah Muhammad ibn Idris Ash-Shafi'i (died 204 AH/820 CE).

Sunnah **(السنة):** A primary source in Islam, the *Sunnah* comprises statements, actions and silent approval of the Prophet Muhammad. These categories of *Sunnah* are passed to us though *hadith* which describe purported acts witnessed, statements heard or that the Prophet remained silent (neither approving or disapproving) when an act or statement happened in his presence (the accepted principle is that silence means consent).

Tabaʿ al-Tābiʿīn **(تَبَعَ التَّابِعِين):** The second generation after the Prophet. It means 'those that followed on from the followers' (see below).

***Tābi'īn* (تَابِعِين):** The first generation after the Prophet. They are called followers as they succeeded the *Ŝaĥabah.* An individual of this group is called a *Tābi'ī.*

***Tafsīr* (تفسير):** Quranic Exegesis.

Thought (ظَنّ): *'Zahnn'* - probable thought or belief. This is when one believes that something is true but there is a doubt that it may be false. In the case of *Zahnn*/thought, the belief in something being true outweighs the doubt.

Tranquillity (طَمَأْنِينَة): *'Thamaneenah'* - reassurance or contentment in ones belief on a matter.

***Uŝūl* (أُصُول):** In Arabic, this means principles or fundamentals of a science; in Islamic terminology *Uŝūl* are the principles or rules that are applied to the sources of Islam to derive theology or jurisprudence. We could say the *Uŝul* are like a template, the sources (Quran, *Sunnah*, *Ijmā'* and any others) are the raw materials and the rulings are the finished product once the template is applied to the raw materials.

***Wājib* (واجب):** An act that is compulsory. In the Hanafi *Madhhab,* it is only different from *Farḍ* by the fact that denial does not result in disbelief.

Zahnn (or 'Dhan'): See 'Thought'.

archegos



About the Translator

Sulaiman Ahmed grew up in Middlesbrough, in the North East of the UK. He graduated with LLB (Hons) in Law and subsequently undertook a PGCE in Mathematics to become a Secondary School teacher, before completing his Masters in Philosophy.

He previously authored the influential book *'Hanafi Principles of Testing Hadith'*, which took a unique and timely look at the controversies surrounding sayings attributed to the Prophet Muhammad *(Hadiths)*. He advocated vetting such narrations in a rigorous manner - unlike the *laissez faire* practices of Salafists and many others, who seem to wish to drown Muslims and non-Muslims alike in a sea of irrelevance and confusion. He has written numerous articles about issues facing Muslims in the West, such as Liberalism, blasphemy laws, sexuality in Islam and Islamic finance. These articles can be accessed on his blog

'Kitaab at-Tawheed' ('The Book of Monotheism') is the famous Sunni theologian Abu Mansoor al-Maturidi's magnum opus (d. 333AH/944AC) and both the work and its author are a foundation of Sunni thought to the present day. Its early provenance and originality, as well as wide and enduring influence, make this book essential for students of theology, philosophy and the history of ideas. Yet despite the wide purported influence of and devotion to his ideas, Maturidi's work has been strangely neglected and untranslated by Muslim and non-Muslim scholars alike. This is the first ever English translation — with commentary — of the first half of *'Kitaab at-Tawheed'*.

This work is unique, providing a detailed and holistic approach to Islamic theology, whilst also being its earliest extant comprehensive source. Maturidi presents the epistemological foundations of his teaching and provides detailed arguments in defence of Monotheism, including his cosmological doctrines such as proofs for the creation and ontology of the Universe. He also focuses on God, His existence and attributes, analysing issues related to anthropomorphism and rationalism amongst many others.

Regardless of theological affiliation, this is an indispensable work for academics and laymen alike.

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